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BLOEPRENT

LEARNING TO LIE



**Sections****See All****News**

- 1 New Teacher Profiles
- 2 New Ethnic Studies Class
- 3 Power Outage Policy
- 4 Grassroots Law Project
- 5 Textbook Shortage
- 6 Interdistrict Transfer Policy

Feature

- 9 Teenagers Social Distancing
- 10 Teachers Union
- 12 Physical Health While Online
- 14 Academic Dishonesty

Arts

- 20 Netflix Documentaries
- 22 Art Classes While Online
- 23 Mask Fashion
- 24 Student Creativity in Quarantine
- 25 The Bigger Picture
- 26 Contra Costa Arts
- 27 Quote of the Issue

Opinion

- 30 9/11 as a Middle Eastern Student
- 31 Partisan Politics
- 32 By The Victors
- 33 Latin Unidos Club
- 34 Pronouns
- 35 Cartoons Page

Sports

- 38 College Commits
- 39 Poor Air Quality Causes Inconsistent Scheduling
- 40 Maskless Practice
- 41 College Recruitment in Quarantine
- 42 Virtual PE
- 43 Struggles of Coaching Amid a Pandemic

On The Cover

As the distanced learning program continues within the AUHSD school district, the struggle with cheating and academic dishonesty begins to grow. To read more about the rise of academic dishonesty with online school, turn to page 14!

Special thanks to LPIE for funding the *Blueprint* this year!

New Teachers Connecting in a Virtual School Setting

Teachers joining the Acalanes community must adapt and develop creative ways to connect

Zach Snyder and Brendan Connelly | Staff Writers

For teachers, there is no greater challenge than the first semester at a new school. This year, the eight teachers joining the Acalanes High School staff must navigate a whole new set of issues in making connections with their students under the shadow of COVID-19.

Leadership and Ethnic Studies teacher Katherine Walton only knows about 40 percent of her leadership students from previous years. She must work hard to find methods to make new connections and create a proper learning environment.

"I have really tried to embed some type of community builder to kick class off every single day and probably will continue to do that throughout the year," Walton said. "I'm a big believer in breakout rooms as a chance for it to become student-centered rather than teacher-centered."

Teachers often utilize the breakout room function on Zoom to form a sense of community within a class. Others tried to find common interests with their students by playing music and using the chat function on Zoom.

"Making connections over Zoom is such a tough thing to do... playing music before class helps. On the very first day, I was playing Bob Marley and at the end of the Zoom two students hung out [to talk about the music]," psychology teacher Nader Jazayeri said.

This fun connection allowed Jazayeri to create a successful, connected classroom environment that many teachers worry Zoom prevents. Other new teachers experienced similar results during the first few weeks of school.

"One method has been doing different check-ins with students," art teacher Lauren Fitterer said. "Using breakout rooms with teacher check-ins has been very helpful because, in a smaller group setting, students are more likely to talk."

Fitterer found unique ways to meet and form relationships with her students. Similarly, history teacher Haley Walsh brought new forms of lecturing and teaching to her

class.

"Instead of lecturing with Google Slides, I do most of them with the app Nearpod," Walsh said.

Walsh shared that her students are more motivated to engage in this online app, which allows for lectures to contain quizzes, polls, and whiteboards.

Despite the creativity distance learning is prompting, many new teachers still have substantial concerns varying from connecting with students to providing equity and recreating the classroom experience.

New history teacher Mark Pitzak, who is splitting his time between Acalanes and Los Lomas, said that his biggest challenge with distance learning is making connections with students.

"To create activities with distance learning is doable because we can alter a lot of different things. You can alter lesson plans, alter activities, it's really hard to find any way to make connections as people are just used to connecting in person," Pitzak said.

However, despite the various difficulties, every new teacher interviewed described multiple benefits to being on Zoom. Zoom provides opportunities to connect one on one with students, avoid an attachment to the bell schedule, and have an organized class.

With all of the challenges associated with distance learning, teachers are seeking feedback from their students to create the best learning environment possible.

"I think teachers should continue to acknowledge that it is different, and ask for feedback from students to see what is working and how to make things more productive; continuing to use zoom time as an interactive time instead of just sitting there being lectured," Fitterer said.

Cooper Clark

Science teacher Cooper Clark began teaching at Los Lomas two years ago after 15 years at Sir Francis Drake High School. At Sir Francis Drake, he taught various science classes, including physiology and astronomy. However, Clark lives in the East Bay and decided to begin teaching at the AUHSD. Last year, there was a greater need for science teachers at Acalanes, particularly in Living Earth (formerly known as Biology), so Clark began to split his time between two schools. He works hard to make connections with students through his many interests.

"I will share my love for technology, coding, trying new things, or playing Minecraft ... I'm trying to convey that in my les-

sons and share these interests with students," Clark said.



Courtesy Photo/Cooper Clark

Whitney Lenet

After English teacher Whitney Lenet graduated from college and took a non-traditional route to teaching, she spent time teaching in other countries.

"I taught abroad in the Philippines and with the Peace Corps, and I also taught high school there, which was an incredible experience," Lenet said.

When she returned to the United States, she worked in the publishing industry as a writer and editor. Lenet then went into teaching in San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara County. This year, Lenet and her fiancé wanted a change and moved to the East Bay, where Lenet began teaching English at Acalanes.



Courtesy Photo/Whitney Lenet

Continued on 5

AUHSD Offers New Ethnic Studies Class

Ethnic Studies may become a graduation requirement if proposed California law passes

Liam McGlynn and Michael Balmat |
News Editor and Staff Writer

After the well-publicized deaths of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbury, and George Floyd, many experienced an awakening to the social injustices arising from racism and ignorance.

With this new interest in learning about the experiences of others in mind, Acalanes now offers an Ethnic Studies class.

The class aims to tackle issues outside of what students learn in their other courses, such as race, ethnicity, immigration, sexuality, and gender identity.

However, due to recent national events, the class had to stray from the original curriculum to address and acknowledge current events.

“Acknowledging, dialoguing, and reflecting is such an important piece of the class and bringing student voices into the space is vital,” Ethnic Studies teacher Katherine Walton said. “There is a definite balance between getting through the curriculum but also acknowledging the current climate and events.”

The 54 students currently enrolled in Ethnic Studies decided to take this class for a number of different reasons.

“Last year during the open house, I heard about the course. It seemed very interesting so I decided to take it,” sophomore Luca Mathias said. “In most history classes we mostly read ancient texts and sources from white authors. Ethnic studies gave me a chance to see perspectives from multiple cultures and learn about my own history.”

As a result of the recent wave of youth activism within the US, some students taking the class hope to learn more about how they can help promote change within society.

“I hope to learn more about this country and where we came from; the stuff that isn’t taught in American history,” sophomore Bennett Dodge said. “I also hope to find out about more ways to effect change in this

country, while also expecting and accepting non-closure as race in this country is an ongoing problem and unfortunately won’t change right away.”

With recent events sparking outrage over racial inequality and justice, the California State Legislature passed Assembly Bill 331 on Aug. 31. This bill will make Ethnic Studies a graduation requirement. California Governor Gavin Newsom is on the verge of signing the bill, which would require all high school students to take the class beginning in the 2025-2026 school year.

Many students currently enrolled in Ethnic Studies hope that the class will one day become a graduation requirement.

“I think this class should be mandatory across the country,” junior Maya Kelly said. “It would help educate a lot of young people, who are the future of this country and the world...with more young people educated in the subject, the less chance there will be for a future that looks like our current state, and hopefully a higher chance for our generation to push for more change.”

However, if Ethnic Studies becomes a graduation requirement throughout the state, problems may arise over how the class will fit into students’ schedules.

“Having a semester or year-long mandatory class would definitely interrupt my schedule,” sophomore Krishna Ram said. “When I entered high school I set up all the APs I would take in which year, and what classes I would take to fill all the requirements needed

to graduate... I would miss out on opportunity to take a subject that might be my future career path.”

Along with the logistical problems that the district must take into account around student schedules, the district would also be required to train teachers on how to teach this class. In order to diversify the AUHSD staff, the district made a push this year to hire more teachers of color.

“We hired 30 teachers and 60 percent of them are people of color, so we did a good job this year in our hiring, but I think we have a long way to go before we have teachers of color at every site that are teaching ethnic studies,” Associate Superintendent McNamara said. “Not that it needs to be taught by a teacher of color, but I think you do need a diverse staff to be able to hold those conversations and for kids to really get a rich experience.”

Despite the challenges that come with adding Ethnic Studies to graduation requirements, Walton is hopeful that the class will help educate students on the aforementioned subjects in a time where they are extremely relevant.

“I like to think of ethnic studies as an anti-racist class and as a framework that the students can then take into other spaces both at Acalanes but also in the community,” Walton said. “I hope that they use the Ethnic Studies framework and their voices to challenge the dominant narrative, to challenge oppression, and to challenge themselves.”



Courtesy Graphic/Ethnic Studies Now

PG&E Updates Power Outage Policy as Fire Danger Looms

Potential power shutoffs threaten to cancel online learning

Erin Hambidge and Saylen Cardoni | Staff Writers

Fire danger is currently at an all-time high due to the dangerous heat waves and lightning storms sweeping through the Bay Area. To prevent wildfires and potential equipment malfunctions, PG&E updated its Safety Power Shut Off policy to provide maximum safety for its customers.

The policy focuses on six main points, most of which center on improving PG&E equipment and technology. According to an official PG&E press release, since the policy's implementation on June 5, PG&E has installed stronger poles, covered lines, and installed underground cables across 105 miles as part of a full-year plan for hardening 241 line miles.

These new developments are vital in preventing wildfires, as it was a utility failure that sparked the Highway 24 fire that burned down the Lafayette Tennis Club last year.

The shutoffs will cause rolling blackouts throughout Lafayette and surrounding towns until the fire danger has ceased.

While the new policy focuses on improving the efficiency of shutoffs by shortening them in length, Acalanes Principal Travis Bell said any potential shutoffs do not bode well for online learning, which will not take place during the power outages.

"I think it depends on the severity of the shutoff and people's access. If we have something that we experienced last year, where a majority of our students are without power, and without internet access, then we would have to cancel for the day just like we did last year," Bell said.

The school is still formulating a written plan in the event of a shutoff, but as of now, students will continue to receive notifications through the Acalanes text service system.

The possibility of a power outage presents more challenges with the current online format, as students now rely entirely



Blueprint Photo/Connor Faust

on their devices to attend class and complete their schoolwork.

"It really depends, again, on how widespread it is and what the access actually looks like. If the power's out, that could affect modems and WiFi access. But if people still have internet access, and they have devices that are charged, it's really a matter of how long will those charged devices last?" Bell said.

With hundreds of fires burning across California already, it seems probable that PG&E will shut off the power more frequently throughout the fall.

The looming threat of power outages forced teachers to modify their distance learning model. English teacher Amy Smedley still plans on having classes, albeit in a very limited fashion.

"I would still hold online classes and record them so students who may miss will have access to the class session. I would try to make the assignments and due dates very flexible during that time to accommodate students who may not have power," Smedley said.

Other teachers' plans may vary depending on the subject but it is clear they will have to make adjustments.

A deciding factor on whether a student can continue their education online or not is if they own a generator. While the num-

ber of people who own generators is still minor, that number is growing as more people realize that outages could become more frequent.

"I think that [Acalanes] should adapt asynchronously. People could still access canvas with mobile data on their phone, and if not, the school could try to provide some sort of wifi system," sophomore Riley Bonner said.

Other students, including sophomore James Cortez, who does not own a generator, agrees with this idea.

"I can always use my phone if the power goes out, but I am limited as to what I can do if I lose connection," Cortez said.

Both agree that losing time to complete schoolwork may result in running out of time to complete the curriculum for certain rigorous courses such as Advanced Placement and Honors classes.

"At this rate, we are already falling behind and it is important to continue education," Bonner said.

Although power outages would be very detrimental to education at Acalanes, most agree that they are necessary and safety should remain the number one priority.

"Given what happened last year and what's happening now, it's better to be safe than sorry," Cortez said.

Grassroots Law Project Founds AUHSD Chapter

Student volunteers hope to combat racism from the ground up

Julia Poole and Lyanne Wang |
Online Feature Editor and Staff Writer

The brutal murder of George Floyd sparked cries for social justice across the country, charging an anti-racist movement both nation-wide and locally with the formation of an Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD) Chapter of Grassroots Law Project (GLP).

While Acalanes recently implemented policies to combat racism through the foundation of an anti-racist curriculum during virtual academies, the AUHSD Chapter of GLP aims to go one step further to eliminate racism in the community.

“We hope to get students more engaged in creating a more anti-racist and anti-hate environment at AUHSD schools. A lot of this community’s problems regarding race stem from ignorance, and we hope to dismantle that by educating people,” Miramonte sophomore and member of the AUHSD GLP Chapter’s Research Team Maddy Morris said.

The Grassroots Law Project, an organization that combines legal expertise with grassroots organizing, founded an AUHSD Chapter in June to better educate students about systemic racism and white-washed moments in history. Within only a few months, the chapter has grown from six people to about 80 volunteers.

Headed by Miramonte sophomore Gemma Leach, the AUHSD Chapter initiated their education, awareness, and mindset campaign on Aug. 14. Leach hopes the AUHSD chapter will broaden the community’s mind about listening and accepting diverse voices.



Courtesy Graphic/Nina Yagual

“The purpose of the AUHSD Chapter of GLP short term is to create an anti-racist and anti-hate culture in our district,” Leach said. “We’re going to do this by educating people on anti-racism work and BIPOC history, campaigning for policy reform, diversifying the curriculum, and creating safe spaces for students of color to share their thoughts or ideas and feel secure in their district.”

With GLP’s main goal to educate the community on racism, the AUHSD Research Team focuses on gathering statistics to write articles on little-known Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) history.

“It is important to read about BIPOC history and events because we learn our history from the conquerer point of view, and never know what the conquered feel, and how they feel the effect of racism today,” Milmoie said.

The purpose of the articles on BIPOC is to portray history in a more accurate fashion, shedding light on BIPOC leaders and events that did not receive credit. Many of the events the articles described shocked students.

“This community as a whole has a lot of work to do. Ignorance makes some people unwilling to change, and that endan-

gers the well-being of minority groups in our community,” Morris said.

Members of GLP work to face the racial issues within the AUHSD by changing students’ attitudes concerning race and diversity. The organization made it clear that educating individuals is the most important step in untangling racism.

“We literally are the future. What we learn now is what will hopefully stick with us for years after we leave this community,” Morris said.

The AUHSD Chapter initially sent out the BIPOC articles in an email format. According to Leach, the chapter sent emails to the entire student body of all four schools in the district through an email address meant for ASB officers. However, an incident on Aug. 13 involving students replying to an email with various responses that included inappropriate language forced them to look elsewhere for methods of reaching the students.

“I think the purpose of the original email was positive and valid,” Associate Principal Mike Plant said.

Now sharing BIPOC history through weekly Instagram posts, GLP works to create a safe online place for individuals to share experiences on racism. Chui believes the growing force of social media brings promise regarding the popularization of the organization.

“We’ve received a good amount of positive feedback since people are reposting our stories and posts. After posting information, people from AUHSD have been asking to join our chapter or asking how to create a chapter at their own schools,” Chui said.

GLP’s growth is a step towards combating the deeply rooted ignorance within the Lamorinda community.

“I hope that GLP can teach our community to be compassionate for our minority members and incite real change in policy in our school district,” Chui said.

Textbook Shortage Inconveniences Teachers and Students

Overdue materials cause struggles for students and staff alike

August Walker and Griffin Ruebner |
Staff Writers

As the Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD) attempted to manage the logistics of distance learning and the possibility of moving to a hybrid learning model in the future, an unexpected challenge presented itself: a massive textbook shortage.

Due to the abrupt shift to distance learning last spring, students were unable to return their school materials as they typically would have at the end of the school year.

The Acalanes community first noticed the problem on Aug. 14, when a Daily Dons email announced that over one thousand textbooks and novels had not yet been returned from last year. On Aug. 27, it was once again addressed in another email.

"We still have many unreturned textbooks from last year, which inhibits our ability to fully furnish this year's needs," Administra-

tive Assistant Joyce Larsen said.

Librarian Barbara Burkhalter is keeping a tally of how many resources were still not turned in.

"The number of overdue textbooks, including English novels as well, is still about 1000 [as of Aug. 28]," Burkhalter said.

As a result of students struggling to obtain the materials for each class, the missing materials put many students at a disadvantage at the beginning of the year.

"I am missing my AP Physics textbook and was initially missing my AP Biology textbook. I recently got an old copy from Las Lomas but a bunch of people still don't have them," junior Cole Regan said.

While many textbooks are found online, teachers understand the benefits of having physical materials at home, especially during distance learning.

"I think that having a physical textbook that you can flip through is certainly easier than a digital textbook in some respects. When you're talking about trying to annotate a novel, then that could be very difficult," math and engineering teacher Michael Buchel said.

Although many books are missing, the majority of students received their required materials at the beginning of the year.

"A lot of times we have more textbooks

than we need for a class," Burkhalter said. "Also, we can borrow books from other sites if they have some available."

Students are beginning to resolve the shortage by returning their materials. There are also several workarounds that can supplement or even replace physical textbooks.

"It's not a disaster situation. It's one of the small hiccups when starting up this year," Associate Principal Mike Plant said. "Like Canvas, we didn't know much about Canvas when the year started but we've figured out almost everything about it. And that's where we're at with textbooks. In the first couple of weeks, we've figured out almost everything... and now it's just up to [the students] to follow up on it."



Blueprint Photo/Mara Korzeniowska

New Teachers

Continued from 1



Courtesy Photo/Lauren Fitterer

Nader Jazayeri

Psychology teacher Nader Jazayeri has taught psychology for approximately 15 years. He

began his career in San Francisco at Lowell High School. After spending about six years in San Francisco, he joined the Acalanes Union High School District at Miramonte for eight years. Jazayeri is now teaching at Acalanes for the first time. He had prior connections to a couple of current Acalanes staff, Associate Principal Mike Plant and teacher Dan Appel. When Plant and Appel taught math at Miramonte, Jazayeri formed a friendship with both of them. He described their friendship as one of the reasons he joined the Acalanes staff.

"I taught at Miramonte for [about] eight years and I really missed Mr. Plant's accent, I missed looking at Mr. Appel's blue eyes, and I thought Mr.

Busse's tattoos made him look so cool, I should probably jump over to Acalanes," Jazayeri said.



Courtesy Photo/Nader Jazayeri
Lauren Fitterer

Art teacher Lauren Fitterer grew up in Walnut Creek and went to Los Lomas High School. After graduating, she

went on to study art at Biola University in Southern California. Lauren Fitterer began teaching a year ago at Los Lomas. Now she is working part-time at Acalanes and Los Lomas in the art departments.

"I came back because I knew the art department at Los Lomas is very strong and I know within the district there are great teachers and programs," Fitterer said.

Continued on 7

Fight for Racial Equity Puts Spotlight on Interdistrict Transfer Policy

With the Interdistrict Transfer Program contributing a large amount of the school's diversity, debate over its cancellation continues

Shrida Pandey | Online News Editor

In California, the quality of education a student receives largely depends on their parent's wealth. In the Lafayette community specifically, the average home price falls around \$1.3 million.

With that price and the lack of affordable housing in Lafayette, the only way for some to attend Lafayette public schools comes from interdistrict transfers. However, as a result of an adopted policy, most interdistrict transfers are no longer accepted into the Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD).

In a highly controversial decision, the AUHSD Governing Board voted to greatly reduce the number of interdistrict transfer students due to budgetary concerns in 2018.

The policy went into effect during the 2019-2020 school year. The district still allows interdistrict transfer students from previous years, AUHSD employees' children, and partner school district employees' children to transfer in from neighboring areas.

One of these students is junior Aviruchi Dawadi, who transferred into the school

district in 2018 because of the better opportunities offered in the AUHSD.

"I am super grateful to go to Acalanes because the schools I was zoned for were not that great and I really appreciate the education that I am able to receive. I feel that the policy is disheartening because there are kids in less fortunate areas who would benefit from a greater education and maybe end a cycle of poverty for a family, but it feels like the district is turning a blind eye to them," Dawadi said.

During the 2017-2018 school year, 13.9 percent of interdistrict transfer students came from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. Alongside this, people of color made up 52.9 percent of interdistrict transfer students. Some students pointed at the transfer policy as a form of segregation, both racially and socio-economically.

"Acalanes should have interdistrict transfer students because it is important to have more diversity and have people of varying socioeconomic positions so students here wouldn't be ignorant to the varying experiences of others, and would be learning about others' lifestyles from both their teachers and their peers," junior Tessa Chan said.

The district's reasoning behind the reduction in interdistrict transfer students is that it is a result of state funding. In the AUHSD, the primary source of school funding comes from property taxes. Due to the high nature of these taxes, the state of California no longer pays the district on a student by student attendance basis. As a result, the district does not earn any money from the attendance of interdistrict transfer students.

"While it would be a positive change to

take in transfer students and ideally increase diversity, I don't think public schools can just snap their fingers and make changes like that because they're funded by local citizens and their tax dollars, unlike private schools. It would take a lot of time and work to figure out how to pay for the extra students, and how to decide how many and exactly who should be accepted," junior Caroline Hesby said.

Other students are more vocal against the district's decision and led campaigns to promote the acceptance of transfer students. The Acalanes Union Coalition for Transfer Students (AUCTS) founded by Miramonte High School students promoted the policy being changed through their website and social media accounts.

"Instagram has been essential for making statistics and data accessible and easily digestible. When students were first educated about the [interdistrict transfer] issue, many people expressed shock. Students can't mobilize if they don't know what's happening but after our [Instagram] post went viral, we had over 50 students join our organization," AUCTS digital media section head Athena Davis said.

Due to the rising public support for the reversal of the policy, the Governing Board agreed to address the interdistrict transfer issue in their Sept. 16 meeting.

"The board will often re-visit policies periodically especially if there has been a change in direction from Sacramento or local interest. Board members expressed interest in our August meeting to further explore the interdistrict transfer policy. I don't recall if board members gave a specific reason but likely due to the public interest," Governing Board member Chistopher Severson said.



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New Teachers

Continued from 5

Hannah Mlsna

English teacher Hannah Mlsna grew up in Southern California and moved around the country as a teenager. She attended high school in Mississippi. Mlsna spent several years in Washington state and attended college in Seattle. She moved to the Bay Area for graduate school at UC Berkeley and later joined Acalanes as an English and journalism teacher.

“I got a really good feeling about the administration here. I had heard such good things about the students...I was drawn to the leadership and the community here,” Mlsna said.



Courtesy Photo/Hannah Mlsna

Mark Pitzak

Mark Pitzak grew up in Panama through elementary school and went to high school and junior high in Petaluma, California. He was in the active-duty Army for about 13 years and went to Iraq. Mark Pitzak practiced international law while in Iraq and in the Pacific Rim, around Japan, Korea, Thailand, and the Philippines. Following his time in the army, he was both a prosecutor and a defense attorney.

As Pitzak deliberated con-

tinuing a career in law, his wife encouraged him to try teaching. He got his teaching credential at St. Mary's College and is now employed at Los Lomas and Acalanes teaching World History and Law and Society.

Ryan Shelley

Automotive Engineering teacher Ryan Shelley grew up in Lafayette. After graduating from college and pursuing a career as an engineer for a brief time, Shelley worked as a government contractor for many years, traveling around the world working on heavy equipment. He returned home in late 2011 and began working on the San Francisco Bay, working the docks, and around tugboats and barges.

“I can honestly say I have never had an indoor or a desk job, and I don't consider work-

ing here at Acalanes as an Auto Technology instructor to be that,” Shelley said.

Haley Walsh

History teacher Haley Walsh grew up in the East Bay and went to Los Lomas. She attended college at Portland State, where she played volleyball. After deliberating between a few majors, Haley Walsh chose history and decided to teach within that subject. With her interest in history, Haley Walsh developed a special talent with in the subject.

“Something interesting about me is that I can say all 50 states in alphabetical order in under 17 seconds,” Haley Walsh said.

She was compelled to teach within a district she was familiar with and is now a World History teacher at Acalanes.

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Teenagers' Social Distancing Practices

Why some teenagers social distance properly and others don't

Zoe Edelman and Sammy Lee |
Head Graphics and Staff Writer

While some people pile together into cars for road trips and others sit spaced apart in lawn chairs, teenagers' safe social distancing practices are a mixed bag.

The beginning of shelter-in-place in March put a halt on all social activity. Teenagers were not going to school, seeing friends, or participating in sports and after school activities. However, as the community shifts towards its goal of reopening, people are integrating interactive activities back into schedules and looking upon social events more leniently. This poses a question—What are the attitudes toward social distancing within the teen community and Lamorinda?

COVID-19 cases peaked in Contra Costa County during a late July surge, with 12,807 cases recorded at once. Although case numbers rose greatly over the summer, the virus is not what is affecting teens the most, according to Tamar Mendelson, a director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Adolescent Health.

"The greatest impacts felt by adolescents stem from school closures, being in the house with family members, and not getting to see friends and peers. Adolescents have different developmental needs than adults," Mendelson said. "Teenagers are at the stage in life when they are very invested in social connections and in separating from their parents."

With this long absence of social interaction, many teenagers developed their own, creative ways of social distancing so they could see their friends again. Some meet together outside in open spaces or in front yards, while others do not social distance at all.

In a few interviews, Blueprint prompted students to describe what activities they partake while socializing with friends during the pandemic.

"I've been trying my best to not let quarantine take away from the fun of my senior year. There have been five consistent people that I've been seeing and we've actually been



Blueprint Cartoon | Zoe Edelman

doing a good amount of things. We've gone to the beach at least once a week, and we obviously took masks with us every time we went," senior Emmalyn Laurenson said.

Some students spend time with friends in a safe manner, but notice that their overall experience differs than it would pre-quarantine.

"I went from not going out at all to going to the park and sitting feet apart, wearing masks with friends. It's definitely been lonely not getting to go out or see friends in the same way I used to," senior Gwen Miles said.

Although many teens strictly follow social distancing guidelines, some have not followed them properly or at all. Many wanted to take advantage of their summer vacations, which entailed partying and get-togethers, none of which are safe, according to current health guidelines.

"I think that teens are horrible at social distancing. I think they are one of the main reasons corona keeps spreading because they can't not be around each other for five minutes," Miles said.

Experts worry about teen's roles as asymptomatic carriers; while they may not experience symptoms of COVID-19, they can easily transmit the virus to more vulnerable parts of the population. By ignoring social distancing protocol, teens are disregarding the health of others.

"Catching COVID-19 should be a very real and frightening concern to everybody in the world. My parents are on the older side, and I'm very afraid I could give them

the virus. Teens are just as responsible for their actions as adults," senior Rosie Grant-Hudd said. "It takes a conscious choice to look at CDC guidelines and decide not to follow them. There is a choice that goes into staying home or going out with friends in close proximity."

Teens are also not shy to post photos with friends on social media, often without masks and in large groups. The teenage narrative seems to focus on not missing out and as a result, it is common that teens follow suit to what they see others doing on social media.

"I don't think teens care about social distancing. I think teens are thinking in the same environment as each other, they preach what they believe," senior Hunter Ridley said. "Some will say 'at the beach' and their friends will comment nice stuff, but then others are posting BLM and activist content and they post wearing masks and staying distant."

Teen students are just like everyone else; they have a responsibility to social distance, wear masks in public, and follow CDC guidelines. Regardless of content trending on social media, the majority of the world is more focused on the fatal coronavirus. In order for cases to decrease and schools to reopen, teens must cooperate with health guidelines because they have a bigger impact in regards to COVID-19 than they think.

"We need to try and do all we can to stop COVID-19, taking all the precautions we can if we don't want this to become our new normal," said Ridley.

Schools Reopening Cause Concerns in Teachers Union

Plans for school reopening creates health worries regarding instructor safety

Catherine Lomond and Connor Faust | Feature Section Editor and Staff Writer

With slogans such as “Community can’t be canceled” and “Dons show up,” Acalanes has attempted to create a supportive community while away from campus. However, amid the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, teachers seek support amongst the District, hoping they will implement the right safety precautions before reopening schools.

The local AUHSD teacher union, Acalanes Education Association (AEA), continues to support their staff and the goal of a safe re-entry for students into their education. Unlike many teacher unions in the nation, the district and the AEA have collaborated with each other to create the safest model for reopening schools.

“Not only do we have a good relationship, we have a very strong leadership of people who are actually the ones in constant contact with the district,” English teacher and AEA teacher Representative Cathy Challacombe said.

Though students and teachers are not on campus for the beginning portion of school, many have expressed concerns regarding safety measures and precautions once a blended learning environment commences.

“Well, I’m old, so there’s that, but of course I worry about infecting my family. I also worry that we’ll return and start spreading it around again and then we will be back where we started,” English teacher Ken Derr said. “But it’s also important to get kids back in school so they can see their friends and be around people.” The AEA shares this disposition regarding reopening, citing worries about the spread of the virus within enclosed areas, and a lack of robust testing methods that yield quick responses.

“Our community’s spread/infection rate is way too high. Right now, if you have symptoms of COVID and get tested, you are lucky to get your results back within a few days, and by that time imagine how many people you could infect. The biggest risks for COVID are enclosed spaces for prolonged periods of time and that’s exactly what a classroom with students would be,” AEA President and Acalanes biology teacher Lori Tewksbury said.

To combat these concerns, AEA discussed solutions to reduce the risks of returning to school and having contact with students.

“Smaller class sizes are going to be what we need. We have larger class sizes in this state than others...a turnaround on testing is also an important thing at this point because the district has masks and good ventilation,” Challacombe said.

Taking concerns of Acalanes teachers and AEA into consideration, the Acalanes administration plans to focus on creating a good environment for both students and staff where learning is safe and effective. To do this, the Acalanes administration plans

to use a combination of CDC and Contra Costa Health Department (CCHD) information as guidelines for when and how Acalanes will reopen.

“We will be following the guidelines of County Health to reopen, including precautionary equipment suggested by the County Health Department. My goal is to make any situation as safe as possible for the students and staff. They are my primary concern,” Acalanes Principal Travis Bell said.

With this in mind, teachers expressed their enthusiasm to get back to school despite fears of the potential of COVID-19 spread in a school environment. Many teachers are supportive of the district’s efforts and would prefer to teach on campus when safe to do so.

“I have been very happy with the district procedures so far and trust that what they put in place in the future will hopefully work. I understand that there are many unknowns but I am willing to give it a try,” Acalanes math teacher Julee Henderson said.



Blueprint Photo / Arlyne Noguera

However, instructors still voice concerns about returning to school without a vaccine available, citing potential difficulty teaching and are apprehensive that protection will only work to an extent.

“When you think about the intimacy of a classroom space, how many surfaces there are, a vaccine would answer that. Nothing is going to keep us safe from [COVID-19]. All the protective things we have are going to make it difficult [to teach],” Challacombe said.

To address these concerns, the district has reconfirmed that they have no plans to reopen in the near future. Despite interest in reopening, the district has concluded, using the California Health Department’s data, that reopening is not a safe option. Safety measures must improve drastically before considering going back to an in-person school environment.

“The other concern we have is adequate testing and contact tracing systems which are not currently in place. We are exploring some potential options to improve those systems which has to be in place before opening,” AUHSD Superintendent Nickerson said.

In the case that school does reopen while COVID-19 is still a prevalent issue, it is likely that teachers will take the risk of their health and their family's health into their own hands.

"Those teachers with medical conditions that put them at high risk will go on a medical leave. Those teachers with family members who are compromised will take family medical leave. These are all options available to individuals and individuals would make their own decisions," Tewksbury said.

The district has confirmed that this option would be available to teachers who deemed it necessary.

"Teachers with a verified medical or immunocompromised condition would have the option to stay home," Nickerson said.

The goal of both the district and the AEA is to create a safe learning environment for students and staff. With the AEA's confidence in the district's plans for a safe reopening, the Dons community will remain strong on online media until a safe reopening can be made.

"Our teachers and students are more than capable of handling this challenge and as much as I would rather have 'live' classes the situation is what it is and I must stay positive and hopeful that together we can be successful in online instruction and learning," history teacher Lyenne Denny said.



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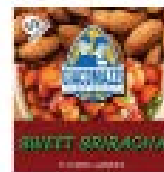
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Physical Health During Online School

Online school is harming students' physical state

Aysha Craig and Juliet Becker | Copy Editor and Staff Writer

As the school day ends, students adjust their necks back into the right alignment as they finally back away from their computer, sore in multiple places from a day hunched over a screen. With the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic affecting the reopening of schools, students now realize that the new online schedule keeps them glued to their seats.

Online school poses new challenges, as it requires students and teachers to stare at a screen and remain seated for long hours at a time. As a result of these new conditions, students and teachers have noticed impacts on their physical and mental health.

For a student, a typical day of online school consists of waking up and heading straight to their computer. Throughout the day it is common that students find themselves stationary, completing work in the same spot. Likewise, teachers spend more time than usual looking at a screen during online school, preparing lessons and familiarizing themselves with the new learning tools available.

Many students find the adjustment from learning in a classroom environment to a home environment challenging. Finding the right space to stay organized and focused throughout the day is often difficult.

"I find it hard to set up a proper workspace because all my stuff is everywhere and I don't get to put anything in binders or in my backpack, instead my work is just all over

my desk," junior Elise Flagg said.

Instead of working at a desk, some students choose to work from their beds, as it is presumably more comfortable. When virtual learning was first put into effect last March, some teachers disapproved of students participating in Zoom meetings from their beds. Educators recommend that students sit up at desks to do their work, however, this can be a difficult and demanding task during six-hour long school days filled with continuous Zoom calls.

"I work mostly on my bed, but when I am at my desk, my back appreciates it a lot more. I have the same productivity in both places," senior Xavier Wesely said.

Although one might think that working in a home environment is more comfortable, students are experiencing physical pains from the nature of online school, which keeps them hunched over laptops for hours on end.

"I do have pain in my back sometimes from just sitting at my desk for six hours...it tires me out," sophomore David DePaepe said.

While attending school in a pre-COVID environment, students were active and on campus for up to seven hours a day, many taking physical activity classes and attending sports practices long after the academic school day. However, attending classes from home does not demand the same physical activity of students, and therefore some students



Blueprint Photo / Arlyne Noguera

are less engaged during their classes.

"If I'm sitting on my bed, I have the urge to fall asleep but [on the other hand] I was way more tired after in-person school," Wesley said.

Staying home from school helps slow the spread of coronavirus amongst students, families, and teachers. However, the new online learning environment is exposing students to an array of physical conditions that were not as prevalent during in-person school, including long exposure to blue light producing screens.

"Muscle tightness, headaches, fatigue, and eye strain can all develop from sitting and staring at a screen for hours. Depression can also be a factor as students have less in-person social interactions with their

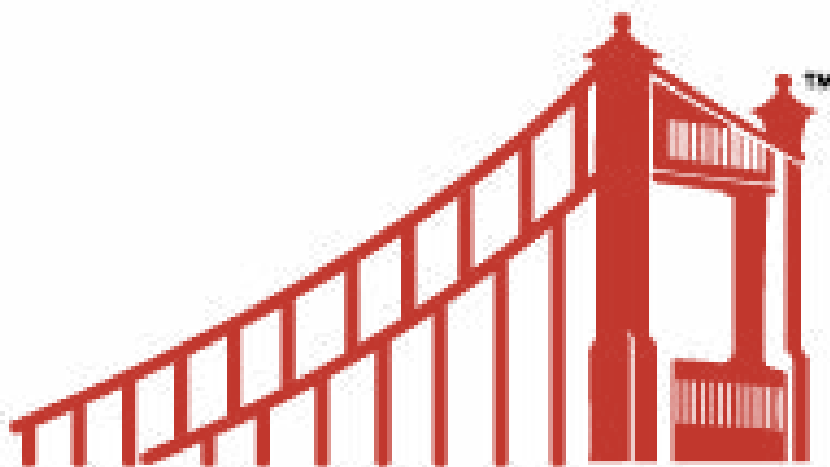
peers and teachers," Acalanes Sports Medicine teacher Chris Clark said.

To improve physical and mental health, it is recommended that students take advantage of all moments outside of class. Although students no longer walk from class to class during passing periods, there is still an opportunity during these times, along with lunch, to step away from electronics and unwind from straining positions.

"I hope that students really take their breaks seriously and that they get up, move around, go outside, and don't just stay on their computer or their phones during the breaks," Acalanes Human and Social Development teacher Monika Voellm said.

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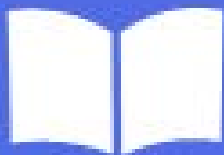
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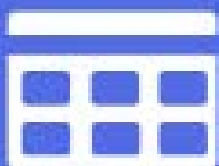
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Students Grapple with Academic Dishonesty

What the new school year and learning system spell for cheating

Alex Ariker and Keith Johnson |

Copy Editor and Head Videographer

Each class at Acalanes relies on a basic foundation of trust and academic honesty. However, the transition to distance learning in the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year spells uncertainty for the integral relationship between students and teachers.

The decision for Acalanes to continue distance learning during this school year forces teachers and administrators to try to thwart possible academic dishonesty in an online environment.

Cheating has always posed challenges, even in a pre-COVID schooling environment. However, since the shift to distance learning in March of the 2019-2020 school year, cheating on assignments is even easier for students who hope to lighten their workload or get a better grade.

But before students cheat, they must weigh the risks and rewards of their actions.

"Whether or not students cheat will vary from student to student depending on if they are prepared for what they are cheating on. If students are not prepared they will be more inclined to cheat," sophomore Zach Robb said.

In response to shifting completely online, Acalanes recently implemented Canvas, a learning management system, which replaced the previously used system, SchoolLoop. Canvas integrates several different websites involved in teaching, helping teachers adjust to distance learning. Popular services such as Zoom and Google Drive are accessible through Canvas, with more to hopefully come in the future.

However, Canvas cannot stop all the issues with online learning on its own, including students' attempts to cheat on assignments.

"I think Canvas is an excellent tool, but if a student is determined to cheat, he or she will," English teacher Erin Barth said.

Luckily, Canvas is working to improve and add more sites as external tools to mitigate the struggles teachers and students have while accessing these sites. One site coming to Canvas in the near future is turnitin.com, which many teachers already used in past years, to check plagiarism among students.

"Some of [the functions embedded in Canvas to prevent cheating] include timed assessments, randomized questions, and individualized assessments- for example in a class yesterday we had 30 different versions of a test given assessing the same concepts but using different questions, a secure

browser, and more," Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD) Associate Superintendent Aida Glimme said.

Unlike the fourth quarter of last school year, students have heavier work loads and a schedule resembling a regular school day. The transition between a relaxing summer to rigorous classwork in the fall leaves students feeling unprepared for the school year to start, turning to academic dishonesty in response.

"Now that school is actually being taken seriously, by the teachers especially, I think that people are being a lot more dishonest because it's harder," sophomore Blaine Wampler said. "It's easier to cheat, but the assignments are also harder."

To reduce cheating this fall, many teachers must reassess how they teach online, including math teacher Harriet Kaizer. Kaizer believes that the solution to stopping academic dishonesty is deeply rooted in the educational atmosphere.

"It's more about the environment we can create in our classes and the relationships we can create with the students," Kaizer said.

To help create this environment, many teachers adapted to an open-note strategy, allowing students to use their notes and worksheets on select assessments. Barth believes that this strategy will better prepare honest and hardworking students for final exams.

"They are only hurting themselves if they [cheat]. If they plan on taking the exam at the end of the year and are cheating their way through the course and the timed essays, they won't pass, and I've told them that," Barth said.

Many students share a similar understanding of the consequences of cheating in the academic classes they take. One of these students is senior Anthony Mirabito, who is taking AP Calculus, among other rigorous courses.

"My teacher is doing basically nothing to prevent cheating because he recognizes the fact that he can't control it," Mirabito said. "But he also stressed to us that the entire purpose of taking AP Calculus is to be prepared for college-level calculus and to be prepared for the AP test at the end of the year."

While cheating on individual assignments can raise students' grades temporarily, some students find themselves unprepared for large tests or assignments.

Some teachers also believe that school exists primarily to educate children, with grades used to confirm that a student understands a topic. However, in highly competitive schools like Acalanes, cheating allows students to skip the hurdle of understanding while still earning good grades.

"I wish grades would be less important so class could be more about the learning but that is the nature of the community we are in and the world we live in when it comes to getting into colleges," Kaizer said.

Despite teachers warning their students about the consequences of cheating, many students still find cheating

unavoidable because of the cutthroat community that Kaizer described.

The motivation for cheating differs from student to student, but one recurring reason students cheat is to help raise their grades in difficult classes.

"The pressure of school and getting good grades can be super intense," one anonymous cheater said.

Another anonymous cheater shares a similar motive.

"I only occasionally do it on homework if I have an insane workload that night and I am feeling overwhelmed," the anonymous cheater said.

Possibly a result of the competitive Acalanes community, many forms of academic dishonesty have risen since the beginning of distance learning, especially types of cheating that are easier to get away without teachers present.

While 16.6 percent of California students in 2019 admitted to using a cheat sheet on a test in the month before the survey collected results, 29.6 percent of Acalanes students said they used a cheat sheet during just the start of the 2020-2021 school year. In addition, the percentage of students who used an electronic device to get help during a quiz or test increased from 14.1 percent to 25.9 percent since 2019.

However, some forms of cheating have understandably decreased during distance learning because of the new conditions students are in. For instance, copying off of someone without permission, decreased from 29.1 percent to just 3.7 percent.

With the transition to online learning, the lack of knowledge about technology among certain teachers leads to an inability to fully prevent cheating. Luckily, the administration helped teachers migrate to Canvas and familiarize them with online learning tools such as seminars and lessons to prevent cheating before the start of the school year. Glimme, among other administrators, helped educate teachers across the District on how to prevent cheating during this transition.

"When students turn in assignments, teachers have different applications they are able to utilize to 'run the answers' through to compare the answers to what is available on the web or what is submitted by other students," Glimme said.

Teachers also look for alternative ways to assess students which will in turn prevent cheating. By changing the content of an assessment, teachers may find better ways to encourage academic honesty.

Abri Brar, the AUHSD's Director of Curricular Innovation and Technology, helped the district transition to Canvas before school started. Brar has helped the district hold meetings with

teachers to help them adjust to Canvas, including three weekly workshops to provide answers to teacher feedback.

Brar believes that changing the types of questions given to students can improve the way teachers assess them.

"Traditional assessments can be adapted, but increasingly we are finding that we need more authentic assessments that offer students the ability to demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways—fewer multiple choice exams, and more skill and performance based assessments," Brar said.

By testing students on their work, in addition to their final answer, teachers can ensure that students understand the topic and are not cheating to get the correct answer.

"Evaluation of skill attainment is the primary function of any assessment. These assessments can be done in a variety of ways and we have technology tools that can help," Brar said.

Despite this, freshman William Weber, among many others, believes that students will cheat on assignments regardless of a teacher's tech-savviness.

"Everyone will cheat in all classes even if the teachers are familiar with tech. There are just some things teachers cannot prevent and a lot of my teachers openly admit that," Weber said.

The administration encourages students to take responsibility and be honest in classes in

hopes to confront academic dishonesty. While respectfully asking students not to cheat works some of the time, Wampler believes that this method does not work for all students.

"Some students are too far gone with [cheating]. They're not going to stop, especially because it's so easy now," Wampler said.

While many teachers actively work to stop students from cheating on assignments and tests, they are not the ones at fault when students decide to cheat.

"It tends to be completely independent of the teacher. Teachers police situations as best they can but it is not their job to stop you from cheating, that is your job," Associate Principal Mike Plant said.

The new methods teachers can use in Canvas to prevent cheating will also help put a stop to the rogue students who decide to cheat.

"I hope that [academic dishonesty] does not [increase] but I know that it is tempting and that it increased in the spring. I think that we can limit it with some of the mentioned strategies," Glimme said.

Students must put in effort while learning even if they are not in a physical classroom. The honesty that students show while learning can help them become more trustworthy in college and future schooling.

"I encourage students to understand that decisions about things like cheating shape how you want to live your life and who you want to be as a human. It's okay to make mistakes, and the academic pressure students feel can result in morally ambiguous choices, but eventually you have to take ownership of the evolution of your character," Plant said.





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Netflix Offers A Wide Range of Documentaries for Every Quarantine Mood

Students explore five different educational films found on the popular streaming site

Aisha Mohanty and Miller Smith | Staff Writers

Whether you love politics, environmentalism, music, or athletics, when it comes to Netflix documentaries, there is something for everyone.

While a majority of the films often fall subject to mediocrity, Netflix subscribers watch documentaries for cinematic diversity. Acalanes Blueprint is pleased to provide our expert insight into five Netflix documentaries worth watching.

Travis Scott: Look Mom I Can Fly

Throughout Travis Scott's "Look Mom I Can Fly," viewers witness the creation of Grammy-nominated album "Astroworld." The film follows the childhood, fatherhood, and career of Jacques Berman Webster II, otherwise known as Travis Scott, highlighting Scott's struggles and successes leading up to the creation of "Astroworld."

Scott lived with his grandmother and brother, Marcus in the struggling Houston suburbs. The movie explores Scott's childhood chronologically, illustrating his story of passion from his first performance at age 11 to his North American tour in 2018. The documentary also examines Scott's demanding life as a father, with the birth of his daughter, Stormi Webster, who came into the world during his musical tour.

"His story is so inspiring because he grew up in a tough place like Houston, and made it to such great heights in the music industry," senior Tucker Gannon said.

The film additionally gives viewers a look behind the scenes of Scott's concerts. The documentary offers more information regarding the creation of some of Scott's most popular tracks, including, "Skeletons," "No Bystanders," "Stargazing," "Yosemite," and Billboard number one hit "Sicko Mode."

"My favorite part of the documentary was watching Tame Impala and Travis produce 'Skeletons' together. It was really interesting to watch two people from different genres

of music come together and make a great song," Gannon said.

After the album's release, the film follows Scott as he performs "Sicko Mode" for the Superbowl LIII halftime show performance. The film also highlights the 2019 Grammys and Scott's reaction after losing all of his first Grammy nominations.

Without his fair share of struggles, Scott would not be here today. Since the devastating Grammy loss in 2019, Scott created his own clothing brand, Cactus Jack, and rose to number one on the Billboard chart with his collaborative album "Jackboys." Scott even secured a deal with McDonalds, releasing the "Travis Scott Burger" on Sept. 8. Whether one enjoys Travis Scott or not, "Look Mom I Can Fly" remains an inspiring documentary worth watching.

13th

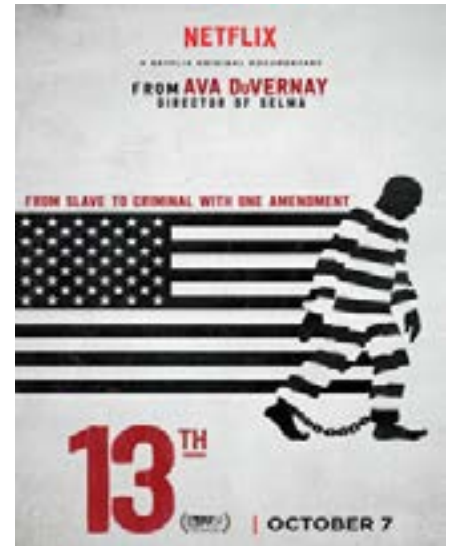
"13th," the Emmy winning documentary named after the constitutional amendment meant to abolish slavery, provides insight on the criminalization of African-Americans and the U.S. prison complex. As the Black Lives Matter movement continues to increase racial awareness, "13th" provides useful context for conversations about racism and the criminal justice system.

The film follows activists, lawmakers, and social influencers as they investigate the effects of the Civil Rights movement and the current injustices the black community faces as a result.

Film writer, Ava DuVerany argues that oppression against African-Americans did not conclude with the abolition of slavery at the end of the American Civil War. Through criminalization of behavior, police brutality, and mass incarceration, America continues to perpetuate slavery.

"The 13th amendment gave African-Americans the right to vote, but it states that if you're a criminal, you can't. Police have imprisoned [POC] to strip them of their right to vote and then they are too poor to get out. In our system, it is better to be rich and guilty than innocent and poor," senior Nicole Frigon said.

The documentary also displays the exploitation of minorities and low-income populations, oftentimes to serve political means.



Courtesy/ Netflix

"13th" portrays how far back the history of inequality and institutionalized racism within the American system actually goes and how it continues today. It shows how [people of color] are not only victims but victors to a system built to keep us contained as second class citizens, and it exposes the ugly truth of how twisted politicians and presidents were for money and their hatred towards the African-American race," sophomore Amani Williams said.

"The prison system punishes POC instead of helping them get the help they need. Our society criminalizes black people, and everyone has to do better because no lives matter until black lives matter," Frigon said.

Becoming

"Becoming" is an 89-minute Netflix documentary that responds to former First Lady, Michelle Obama's, bestselling memoir. The film explores her inspiring journey through her 34-city book tour, after its release in May 2018.

Michelle Obama transports the audience into her world, chronicling every experience from her childhood in the South Side of Chicago to her demanding life as the first African-American First Lady of the United States. Although her role as First Lady presented obstacles and expectations, she paved her own path, establishing herself as one of the most powerful and brilliant women in White House history.

"In the documentary and in the book, you can tell that Michelle Obama is an inde-

pendent, well-educated woman that has overcome so much adversity. She is definitely someone that I look up to,” junior Emma Johnson said.

Even after her term as First Lady, Michelle Obama continues to advocate for women's rights around the world, encourage healthier outlets for families, and vocally highlight flaws in our nation's education systems.

“You can tell she works really hard with students. Before Obama's presidency, there was a very noticeable wealth gap that affected school tremendously. But then she started pushing for more reforms,” senior Ally Han said. “She made people a lot more aware of the inequities in our school systems, and made extraordinary efforts to have personal relationships with several different schools.”

“Becoming” encompasses the true meaning of discovering a person's voice. In her compelling documentary, Michelle Obama expresses that anyone can make an impact on their community, as long as they wield their voice proudly.

“Michelle Obama is very well-educated, and one of the most famous female people of color in our nation's era. There is so much work that needs to be done in our country, but Michelle Obama represents hope and reminds people that change is possible,” Han said.

The Last Dance

“The Last Dance” is a ten-part sports docuseries focusing on the career of Michael Jordan along with the end of the Chicago Bulls' winning dynasty. The series features footage in the fall of 1997 as Jordan and the Bulls overcome adversity and chase their sixth NBA title in eight seasons.

Jordan began his basketball career as a scrawny and short player, unable to make his high school team. Jordan, however, rose to become an incredible star player, household name, and worldwide phenomenon.

“One of the most inspiring things about Michael Jordan is that he didn't make his high school varsity team as a sophomore because he was too short,” senior Jackson Aris-Dumas said.

Episodes one, two, and three of the docuseries focuses on the start of Jordan's career and the emergence of the Bulls prosperity. The Bulls faced hardships in the late 1980s as they battled injuries, a devastating defeat against the Pistons, and heaps of offcourt drama.

After the Bulls' struggles in the eighties, Jordan and his teammates turned things around, and quickly became one of the most dominant teams of all time.

“Michael Jordan's story is inspiring because as good as he was, he still had a long list of shortcomings. Someone as good as him even has his setbacks and bad days. They weren't just mistakes, but necessary learning experiences,” sophomore Theo Stoll said.

Episodes four, five, and six showcase the Bulls winning three straight NBA titles in 1991, 1992 and 1993. However, Jordan announced his retirement at the end of the 1993 season, and began his transition to baseball.

Although, Jordan's return to basketball in the final episodes didn't stop the Bulls from losing the playoffs. As a result, Jordan worked harder and led his team to three more championship victories in 1996, 1997 and 1998.

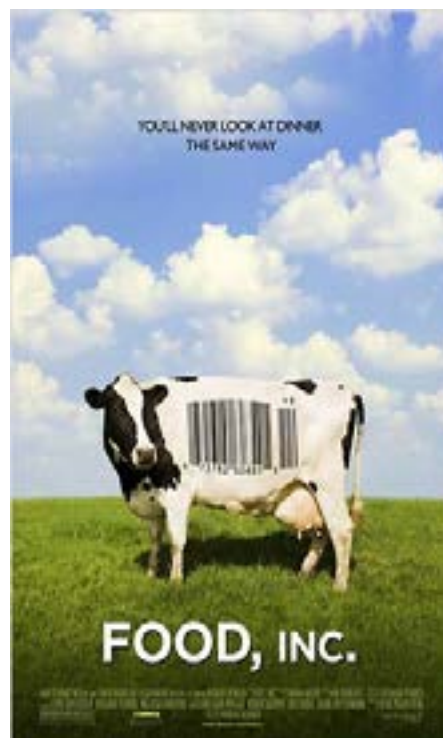
The Last Dance docuseries is a truly inspiring story, focusing on overcoming adversity while communicating that success does not come easily, but rather with drive and determination.

Food Inc.

The 2008 American documentary, “Food Inc.,” produced by Robert Kenner, investigates the process of factory farming and the food industry to unearth uncomfortable truths about American consumerism.

“Food Inc.” explores the harsh reality behind America's daily consumption of meat, and its effects on the agriculture industry.

“Everyone should watch ‘Food Inc.’ because a lot of people don't see the backstory of animal treatment, and yet, we are direct consumers of that. We should know where the things we are consuming come from because one, morally it is correct, and two our health benefits from it,” senior Jasmine Toni said.



Courtesy/ Netflix

“Food Inc.” also examines the major environmental impacts that result from chemically induced industries.

“The environment is increasingly getting worse, and we are contributing to it daily. The sad part is that it goes unnoticed because people simply eat without looking at the consequences,” senior Tate Huisinigh said. “If we knew where it was coming from then we could slow down our consumption.”

After examining the negative implications of meat production and consumption, “Food Inc.” provides simple, healthy, and sustainable solutions. This film articulates that by participating in the sustainable food movement, anyone can help prevent the impending destruction of Earth's resources.

“I really appreciated the numerous eco-friendly alternatives from the documentary so I can start making a change in my eating habits. It is so important to be educated on these topics so everyone knows that if we all started to make these changes collectively, it could really make a difference. We can all help the world gradually overcome its current environmental struggles,” Toni said.

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Art Classes Get Creative with Online Learning

The virus forces the shift to a virtual creative environment

Sabrina Agazzi and Irene Meklin |
Copy Editor and Staff Writer

Usually, art classes include charcoal-stained hands, clay caked fingernails, and a sanctuary away from the stress of a hectic school day; yet due to the revised distance learning curriculum, students must adapt to the limitations of art class at home.

As the school year begins entirely online, art classes create new methods of engagement and find ways to supply students with the materials needed for the year.

The Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD) first modified classes when it turned to distance learning this March. Teachers and students alike faced the struggle of adapting to a new way of learning, but art classes face a unique problem.

Acalanes' art classes are hands-on and require materials that students can only find in the art room in a typical in-person year. The idea of spending a year without adequate materials causes some students to worry that they will not achieve their fullest potential artistically.

"With fewer materials and less space at home, I think it will be harder to make pieces that I will really like and that I'm really proud of," junior Maya Kelly said.

To combat this issue, art teacher Robert Porter requested basic materials that his students can keep at home. Lafayette Partners in Education (LPIE) generously responded to his request and ordered supplies.

"Materials are going to be really basic this year. I'm really grateful that LPIE stepped up as we have to buy things for each student and we can't share," Porter said.

In some alternative arts classes, however, sending students essential materials is not an option. For example, woodshop classes rely on large machines and tools that are impossible for students to access at home.

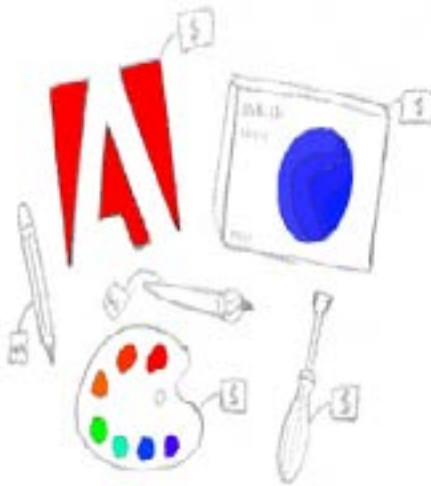
"The reason people take woodshop is for hands-on, to use their brain in a different way, and obtain skills with their hands," woodshop teacher Abigail Smith said. "We have a beautiful woodshop with really nice machines

and students want to learn how to use those machines... we can't send a machine to every student."

Without these machines available for students, Smith found a way to maintain an interactive woodworking class: whittling. Woodshop students will receive wood and tools at their homes to participate in this new project.

Although teachers and LPIE worked together to supply students with materials, the cost of these supplies is another problem arising.

"I have to buy pencils for everybody, and paintbrushes for everybody and paint for everybody. The expense was higher," Porter said.



Blueprint Cartoon/ Seth Kline

Additionally, art classes still need to adjust their schedule to conform to this new kind of normal. Without a physical art class to make a mess in, Porter must cut certain projects from this year's curriculum, such as projects involving charcoal and pottery wheels.

Another important part of art classes affected by distance learning this year are art shows. In past school years, art students were given the chance to present their work to their peers. Now, students and teachers are unsure of how art shows will work or if they will happen at all. One idea would be to create a website to present students' art pieces.

"It would be nice to have that kind of

exposure and have that sense of community," Porter said. "It's not as good as being there in person, but we could make it a fun assignment."

Equally as important as materials and projects is the social environment the classes provide. Students would utilize the art room as a place to relax, spend time with friends, and learn new creative techniques.

"What I miss most from doing art in person is being around other people while I'm working. Not necessarily talking to them, but having other amazing artists in the room with music playing is very special," senior Ash Ericson said.

Art classes give students a place to unwind, yet a relaxing environment is hard to mimic through a Zoom call.

"My biggest concern is [distance learning] isn't an escape from stresses in our day to day life. Some people really look forward to having an artistic outlet or to learning a new skill and I'm trying my best to keep that," Smith said.

As problems with the transition to distance-learning are not limited to art classes, students and teachers alike are hopeful for a successful and productive year.

"I'm confident that even with paired down materials and with less access to materials we can still do great work, it's just we're gonna have to work in limits. Hopefully that will force us to be a little more creative as far as what we use and how we use it," Porter said.



Students Use Mask Mandate for Self Expression

People not only use masks as a safety precaution, but as a fashion statement and a staple in everyday life

Haley Rurka and Juliana Upp | Staff Writers

When leaving the house, there are certain necessities most people immediately reach for: your phone, keys, and wallet. However, amidst the world-wide pandemic, people now reach for a new item, their mask.

As a result of COVID-19, Acalanes students use masks not only to filter dangerous particles and follow health and safety guidelines, but to express their trendy fashion sense.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports numerous instances in which wearing a mask strongly prevents COVID-19 transmission.

The newfound wardrobe addition holds obvious health benefits, but many students look beyond the mask's effectiveness, using the mandate as an opportunity to explore their style.

"Masks are crucial to stopping the spread of COVID," junior Sally Sheehan said. "But I also think that masks can add to an outfit, as you experiment with different color combinations and patterns."

Time at home gives rise to many trends that have since shown up in masks. Tie-dye gained popularity as people looked to crafts to pass the extra time spent in quarantine.

"I saw a lot of tie-dye masks because people were very bored and wanted to be creative," senior Lyla Cox said.

Like Cox, other students began tie-dyeing as an easy and fun hobby. Due to an excess of free time, the demand for the colorful pattern grew during quarantine. TART Collections, a Lafayette based fashion label who topped Amazon's list for choice masks, adopted the tie-dye trend.

Jamie Finegold, CEO of TART, says their blue tie-dye masks are the number one

seller.

"The whole world really is about tie-dye right now, and I think tie-dye kinda makes people happy. You know, it's like a mood booster," Finegold said.

When looking for a mask, Cox said she first wanted something comfortable and effective, but also colorful and stylish.

"My favorite mask is from TART and is cotton. This is my favorite mask because it fits comfortably on my face and around my ears," Cox said.

One of TART's best sellers is their plain black cotton masks. The simple design presumably became a crowd favorite because of its sleekness and effectiveness.

"Black is always the best color in anything we produce in our clothing line, so no surprise that black was top three," Finegold said.

Fashion movements in decades past not only express personal taste, but often reflect the pressing issues society faces in that moment. Fads and trends fade as time passes, yet become staples of that period's identity.

"Personally, I think that masks will be a defining fashion trend for the generation. This recent pandemic has definitely been a big part of our lives," junior Lawson Hollar said. "In the future, I do think the masks will be seen as a part of fashion that represents this period of time."

The statement that fashion trends often coincide with social and celebrity influence rings true for commercialized mask fashion as well.

"I definitely have gotten some inspiration from celebrities. I saw someone wearing one with rhinestones so I made my own with a bedazzled heart," junior Brooke Blacklidge said.

Political movements also impact mask styles. With the prominence of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, thousands of sellers on Amazon and Etsy offer BLM masks.

"I bought a BLM mask to wear to a protest I went to," Yoshinaka said.

Using a mask to make a political statement is a great way to express one's beliefs while simultaneously staying safe. Many politicians, including Donald Trump and Joe Biden, now advertise masks to promote

their campaigns.

"I think it's super important that politicians wear masks because they are the people everyone looks up to and sees as role models," junior Loïc Windfuhr-Durand said. "Their whole job is meant to set a good example for others."

Advertising masks on social media also became common among fashionable mask companies. Numerous students comment on the influx of mask advertisements they receive daily.

"I get a lot of ads for masks on Instagram, where I follow a lot of fashion accounts, so that makes sense. They seem to be targeting people who like vibrant colors," Blacklidge said.

While attempting to follow the mask requirements, students also use the opportunity to participate in popular trends. When asked if they wore masks for looks and to follow trends or for health and safety, there was an overall consensus that safety comes first.

"When buying a mask I just look for one that will be effective in preventing the spread of COVID. Of course a stylish mask is good, but making sure you're being responsible is more important," junior Matt Soto said.

Despite the circumstances in which students remain forced to follow the mask mandate, the face coverings continue to provide a flourishing outlet for self expression.



Blueprint Photo/ Emma Uffelman

The Polarizing Effects of Quarantine on the Creativity of Students

Managing to stay creative during quarantine can be a challenging feat, while losing touch with creativity requires no effort at all

Aaron Vaserman and Izzy Smith | Staff Writers



Blueprint Photo/ Emma Uffelman

The past six months were chock-full of devastating and eye-opening events. A global pandemic put the world on pause, and millions of people worldwide continue to struggle everyday. Public figures perish one after another, including trail-blazing actor Chadwick Boseman, who recently lost his four-year battle with colon cancer. Famous or not, people everywhere feel the effects of COVID-19.

For some, quarantine is a perfect opportunity to work on their individual crafts, yet, it can be difficult for others to find that same inspiration and motivation to create. Junior George Rogers, a member of the music program, details his experience with a creative block during quarantine.

"I definitely experienced what felt like a creative block during quarantine. I found it tough to follow through on my compositions," Rogers said.

However, other students use quarantine as a time to strengthen their skills and thrive. Without the constant weight of school and other stress piling up, quarantine allows students the opportunity to grow. Senior Amanda Todhunter, a member of the Acalanes Wind Ensemble, found benefits from quarantine.

"Since I was practicing more often than I had before, my skills improved drastically," Todhunter said.

Compared to other activities, visual and musical arts are lucky, considering the restrictions COVID-19 has placed. For example, team sport athletes and volunteers must stay at home during this time and cannot engage in their activities. On the other hand, artists and creatives have the ability to work on their projects and improve their skills from home.

Artist and senior Chloe Wu also details her increased productivity during quarantine.

"I feel like I did more art than I did before the quarantine. I'm not sure if it was how much time I had on my hands, but I seemed to find more inspiration in a lot of different places," Wu said.

To combat creative blocks, students find inspiration in little things as simple as brainstorming possible ideas and projects.

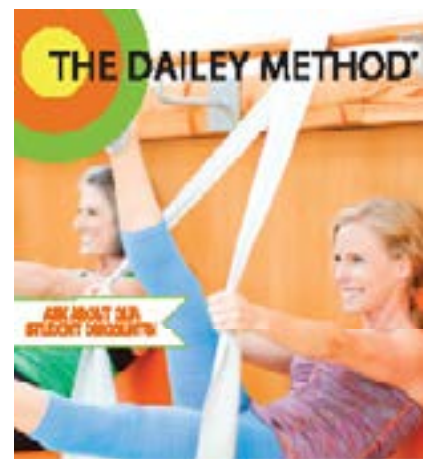
"I'm used to playing with other people quite often, so quarantine had me spending a lot more time in my head than I'm used to. This, combined with lots of listening to my favorite artists and biggest inspirations, led me to tapping into a really personal sound on my instruments," Rogers said.

Amidst the pandemic, Acalanes artists wait eagerly for the next time they can showcase their craft. Many students have various projects in line to display once the coronavirus is under control.

Senior Max Simas, musician and friend of Rogers, also participates in productive music endeavors, creating an album due to come out soon.

"Like every musician, I eagerly await the next time I will be able to practice and perform live music with other people, whenever and however that may be. I'm especially looking forward to the release of one of my good friend's albums. I'll be playing the saxophone on it," Rogers said.

Inspiration can strike at any moment, but it can also go dry for days, weeks, or even months on end. Managing to stay creative during the quarantine is a challenging feat for many, while losing touch with creativity is effortless.



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The Bigger Picture

Rapper Lil Baby uses music to fuel the Black Lives Matter movement

Miller Smith and Kyle Bielwaski | Staff Writers

On May 9, 2020, white police officer Derek Chauvin knelt on the neck of 46-year-old George Floyd for almost nine minutes, tragically killing him as he pleaded for mercy. Widespread anger and sadness spread across America. In response, Lil Baby opens the song with news recordings from the days following Floyd's murder.

In the wake of George Floyd's tragic death at the hands of law enforcement, Atlanta rapper Lil Baby wrote the hit song "The Bigger Picture." Within the track, the lyrics depict Baby's feelings toward police brutality and systematic racism in America.

"It's Bigger than black and white. It's a problem with the whole way of life. It can't change overnight. But we gotta start somewhere."

Fatal police shootings in the United States show large differences based on race. Among Black Americans, the rate of fatal police shootings between 2015 and August 2020 stood at 32 per million of the population, while for white Americans, the rate stood at 13 fatal police shootings per million of the population. The differences between these statistics illustrates an aspect of the major discrimination in the United States.

Protests against police brutality and systemic racism spread worldwide in the days following Floyd's death. On June 6, half a million people in 500 towns protested for justice across the U.S., including Lil Baby.

"You can't fight fire with fire

I know, but at least we can turn up the flame... Seems like we are losing our country, but we gotta stand up for something, so this is what it comes to," Lil Baby said in the song.

There is a need to protest against racially driven brutality and systematic racism inflicted by the police. The reality of racial inequity remains bigger than a single person, and protests still rage across America today because of it.

"The Bigger Picture" influences and inspires its audience to stand up for what they believe in. Baby's writing portrays that by coming together, everyone

Blueprint Graphic/ Anna Yiannikos



can bring awareness and justice to the disparities racism causes in the U.S.

"It addresses what's happening with the riots and Black Lives Matter movement and shows the empowerment of black people in these times, uniting together," senior Maddie Rogers said.

Throughout "The Bigger Picture," Baby addresses racial matters regarding biases, institutional racism, and cultural racism. These issues began in the 17th century and continue to plague America today.

Lyrics such as, "they killing us for no reason," and "throw us in cages like dogs and hyenas," highlight the effects of institutional racism Baby, along with millions of other African-Americans, experience daily.

"The lyrics are really deep because it talks about black mothers grieving for their sons who were killed and people fearing for their lives whenever they step out of the house. It also brings up a lot of issues people are afraid to talk about but finally coming to terms that we need to fix these injustices in the U.S.," Rogers said.

Other lyrics like, "every colored person ain't dumb and all whites not racist, I be judging by the mind and heart, I ain't really into faces," conveys cultural stereotypes and biases in America.

"The Bigger Picture" conveys a message about the current issues in America and remains an anthem for the Black Lives Matter movement.

"He's very passionate about his music and with everything happening in the world right now he stepped up and said something which I respect," freshman Jordan Brown said.

The success of this song cannot be argued, as it reached number seven on the Billboard charts receiving more than 100 million streams in America and 100.5 million streams worldwide, making it the most-streamed track after the death of George Floyd.

All the proceeds earned from "The Bigger Picture" go to organizations supporting and furthering the Black Lives Matter movement.

COVID-19 in the Contra Costa Arts Community

How the pandemic affects the futures of students and local performing arts professionals

Juliet Becker and Alexandra Ames | Staff Writers



Courtesy Image/ Danville Social

Even in the best of times, the stereotypical “struggling artist” finds it hard to make a sufficient living; however, since the beginning of the global COVID-19 pandemic, incomes for the average artist are lower than ever.

Since artists’ careers depend on large gatherings typically held indoors, performing artists and art-related business owners struggle to stay afloat throughout the pandemic. Not only are artists forced out of work, but unemployment benefits are insufficient sources of income for residents in such an affluent area.

Prominent local performing arts centers, such as the Leshner Center for the Arts in Walnut Creek, were required to close under COVID-19 induced restrictions. The company laid off many employees, including managers, actors, designers, directors, technicians, and dancers.

“Here have been quite a few of my staff members who have been put on furlough. We stopped on March 17 and had to close the Leshner Center to any performances,” General Manager of the Leshner Center of the Arts Scott Dension said.

Considering the six month gap between March and now, the pandemic’s effect on just one performing arts center remains uncompromising.

“We have lost probably in the upwards of

about 40 people and now I have six people who are maintaining the building and planning programs for the upcoming months,” Dennison said.

The Leshner Center for the Arts is not unique in its inability to stay open. Lafayette’s Town Hall Theatre Company also experiences an inability to hold its usual performances and classes.

“Since the shelter-in-place began we’ve suspended nearly all on-site work. Classes have been held via Zoom, as have all meetings. All performances have been suspended,” Managing Director of Town Hall Dennis Markam said.

Local art companies’ reliance on financial community support recently increased because so many employees unfortunately lost their jobs.

“Right now the most helpful thing the Acalanes community can do is consider becoming a sustaining donor. Right now, aside from classes, we’re taking this time to really look at what we can do during COVID-19 and when we return, so we’ll have more ways to help in the coming months,” Markam said.

Numerous people, including artists, rely on the government to supply unemployment benefits. The Bay Area is an infamously expensive area to live, regardless of the pandemic. Residents of the county must move away due to their post-pandemic unemployment, with artists and performers following subsequently.

“Being on unemployment for a long time, I do not think that is sustainable. And more importantly, I do not think it is desirable for the people who are artists, actors; they strive to be interactive and Zoom cannot do it all,” Dennison said.

The Leshner Center also looks to the local community for financial aid.

“Because of our plaza renovation we are selling pavers in front of the center for people to put their family names on there. That is a fundraiser for us and certainly going to the Leshner center, and donating on our website,” Dennison said.

While performing arts businesses have been affected by COVID-19, the artists themselves struggle as well. Dancers of the local ballet company, Diablo Ballet, cannot perform and therefore cannot work and practice as well. Their lack of practice and performance

not only affects their physical skill but their creativity.

“[My creativity] definitely has been stifled, usually I would say within the first two months I said I was going to use this time to maybe explore making dance films, but it’s hard to keep that motivation going, so I definitely think it’s been stifled,” Diablo Ballet dancer Jackie McConnell said, “I definitely, definitely miss [performing]. I am ready to go back; I want to go back.”

Acalanes performing arts students are also impacted by the lack of in-person classes and performances, and the fact that their schedules must change drastically.

“Since I haven’t been able to perform on a stage and experience theatre for quite a while, it definitely feels like I’ve lost something, but I know in the end the opportunity will come again,” senior Katie Bettencourt said.

Due to a ban on most close personal contact, drama students cannot participate in in-person classes. Seniors who would like to pursue careers in theatre or music remain at-risk due to the lack of performances and practice.

“As far as my career with it goes, I’m only planning on minoring in music, so I’m not too stressed about getting set back with that, but I am missing out on experiences for it,” Bettencourt said.

As much as this pandemic affects the short term career of these artists, it is also very detrimental in the long run.

When asked about how the pandemic affected their business and the art industry as a whole, citizens responded with a lack of hope in terms of recovery.

“That’s a sad question because I don’t think we will ever recover fully, there’s companies who have already had to close,” McConnell said.

The loss of artists and local performing arts companies is a loss of culture in the Bay Area. However, some artists are more optimistic about the bright side of the pandemic and the positive impact it has on the community.

“Do I think COVID will have a permanent impact on the arts? I kind of hope so. I hope that this experience makes us reevaluate how we do what we do, and explore new ways to create and share art,” Markam said.

Quote of the Issue

“History repeats itself endlessly for those who are unwilling to learn from the past.” - Leon Brown

Kayli Harley | Online Editor in Chief



Courtesy/ Anne Thiselton-Dyer

When someone you love becomes sick, really sick, could-possibly-die sick, your life changes. You watch them lie in bed, inhabiting a body that is strained beyond your comprehension. You watch them walk around, you watch them fall asleep, and you watch them laugh. You watch them and you wish that you could ease their pain.

You drop everything for them so that you can sit by their side, and if you don't drop everything, you think about them every day. You call them, text them, and do anything to check in. You do what you can because you care, and because you want them to fall out of their illness and back into their health.

When someone you love becomes sick, really sick, could-possibly-die sick, you change your life. Even if they don't ask you to change it; even if you have no power over their recovery, you do. Now, people are asking you to change your life, you do have the power to influence the outcome, and you are choosing to turn your back on them.

What could you possibly gain out of your rebellion that is more valuable than the life of another human who is only asking you to care? The choices you make right now do not just shape your story, they also shape our story. You hold the pen in your hand; each choice is a word, each choice is a statistic. Stop writing our demise.

The world is asking us to listen, our communities are asking us to listen, our families are asking us to listen, and so many of us have chosen to be deaf for over six months. This does not have to last forever; these changes do not have to be permanent, but we need to make them now. We need to make them because we are not just living what will become history, we are reliving it with every disregarded mask, every party full to the brim with people, and every “illegal” touch; we are conditioning this history's repetition.

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9/11 as a Middle Eastern Student

Racism's impacts on Middle Eastern students and Acalanes' overall education

Leda Abkenari | Liaison Editor

On the morning of Sept. 11, 2001, the U.S. met tragedy. Four coordinated attacks by the Islamic terrorist group, Al-Qaeda, ended the lives of 2,977 Americans. And while this day affected the lives of many, it forever changed the lives of every Middle Eastern American.

The yearly anniversary of this tragedy is commemorated by institutions across America. Individuals often begin their day with a moment of silence, while in many classrooms, this day is dedicated to an entire lesson.

My earliest understanding of this day occurred in classrooms on its anniversary. While my teachers lectured and played

videos about the tragedy that struck the U.S., the end of the lesson was always turned back onto myself and not by choice.

Teachers would single me out to speak about this event and how it affected my family and I. This most recently happened in a high school history course.

After my teacher had finished the lesson commemorating 9/11, the classroom went quiet. The silence was ended abruptly by him singling me out and saying, "I notice you're Middle Eastern." I was shocked. He continued saying, "your parents were probably beaten and spit on after this occurred, right?" I was singled out in front of my peers and was met with microaggressions

along with the assumption of my race.

While this left me without words, it was not the first time I was associated with a lesson about 9/11. Each year, I would unwillingly become "teacher" as my administrators relied on me to be the best source of information about an event that occurred before I was born. The microaggressions of my teachers only encouraged the ones I faced outside of class from my peers; people called me racist nicknames that associated me with the act of terrorism.

As 9/11 neared each year, I grew to expect the events that I would face in my classrooms. 9/11 became the only time teachers asked me to speak

about something that was remotely my "culture" and the only time I remember being taught about the Middle East.

The teachings were never about the beauty of the Middle East or its enriching culture, it was only ever a depiction of savagery. As we honored the thousands of lives lost in New York, the millions of innocent Middle Easterns continuously murdered in relation were never mentioned nor honored. The U.S.' bombings in return of 9/11 are taught as "payback" and deemed as "a rise above ashes" on behalf of the U.S in classrooms.

As history teachers fed this white washed information into the mouths of students, the only thing that left classrooms on 9/11 was Xenophobia and Islamophobia.

The world history that I had been taught my entire life, was white history and it glorified and beautified white supremacy. While 9/11 affected millions, it shouldn't be the only time the Middle East is mentioned in classrooms.

Schools and districts in the U.S. harbor biases that affect me and all students of color; and that in turn changes the education for every student. All students deserve a curriculum that can represent every culture and race truthfully; a curriculum that highlights both the beauties and mistakes made by both parties.



Blueprint Cartoon / Freschttta Warres

It's Time to Amend Partisan Politics

Political parties triumphed largely unquestioned throughout American history, but the consequences of partisan divide are increasingly apparent.

Zack Lara | Staff Writer

Political parties are an aspect of modern American democracy undefined by the Constitution, condemned by the founders of America, and the cause of mass political disunion throughout American history. They're a recipe for disaster; yet political factions have ravaged the United States since the birth of our nation. It is time to reunite, not as Republicans or Democrats, but as American people.

America created political parties on the grounds of establishing a foundation for the democracy of our newborn nation; founding fathers introduced the two-party system in the dispute over the Constitution of 1787.

However, despite any mention in the Constitution, political parties quickly became an essential component of American politics. Americans adopted this strategy of political division to solve issues; the thought was to equally represent both sides of each argument based on generalized political beliefs. Contrary to the goal, this pursuit of organizing common interest gradually transpired into the unhealthy, fiery, and frankly intolerable contest that rules politics today. Political parties urged an ever-increasing divide between Americans throughout US history, and it's apparent what a massive mistake these factions were.

Everyone has diverse and individual opinions and it's simply unfair to generalize these into two parties. The Democrats and Republicans have unchangeable stances on every issue, but even if you disagree with ideals from either side, there is pressure to align with one. It's a ridiculous system, but our country has ingrained this practice into voters' minds for

generations.

Take presidential elections; political parties make these elections a twisted game for politicians, and they've played the same game for years. First, candidates must align with Democrats or Republicans. Then, they bash the other party looking for citizens' support, and, for bonus points, lie about your beliefs and pull quick one-eighties to secure the popular vote. Oh, you're a third-party candidate? Good luck! Since 1920, only four third party candidates have won a single electoral vote in presidential elections.

There are two major issues: the strategy of antagonizing the other party directly encourages Americans to hate each other based on political affiliation, and the two-party system suppresses third parties and their candidates.

During the 2016 Presidential Election, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump viciously pitted each other's supporters against

one another. To a Hillary supporter, a simple MAGA bumper sticker could immediately portray someone as ignorant, stupid, and ultimately an enemy, even if they don't know anything else about that person. This political strategy tears human relationships apart.

The two-party system, by its very nature, limits the potential for outside voices to succeed. Other parties are consistently overpowered by Democrats and Republicans because the majority of Americans align with one of two major parties, so the votes that third parties receive equate to almost nothing. Consequently, lesser parties vanish within a few stages of each election.

Even if outside parties stood to combat the two-party monopoly in American politics, they would either overtake a current party or simply add another group to the mix, only further complicating the separation among Americans. It's essential to prioritize national

interest. Americans need to set aside partisan differences in favor of the wellbeing of our country. It's natural and necessary to form coalitions based on similar beliefs if only to be heard, but the issue resides in the division, attitudes, and mass generalization that two parties promote.

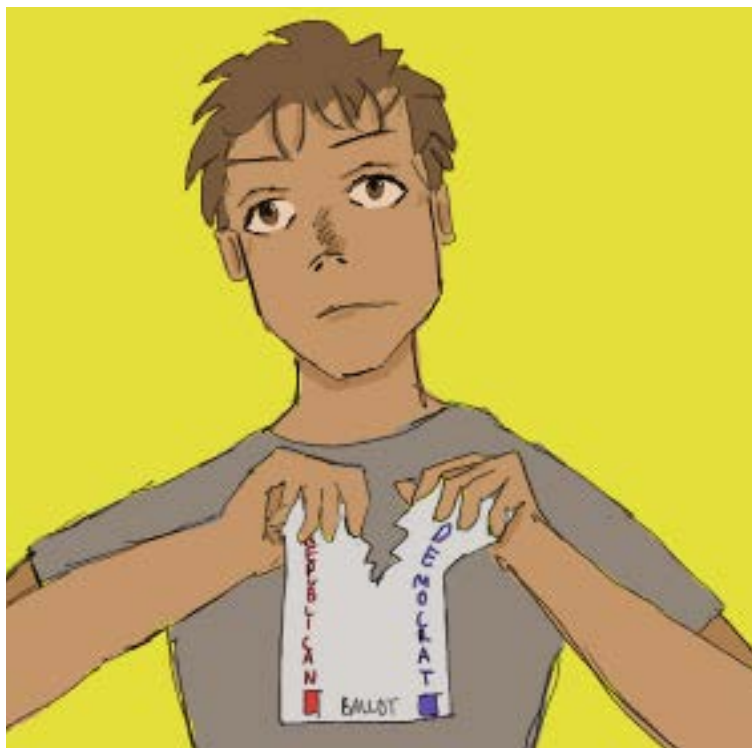
We must tear down our reliance on partisan affiliation to define beliefs. Fortunately, Americans are beginning to accept this. More Americans register as independent each year.

In early August data from Gallup, 26 percent of participants identified as Republican, 31 percent as Democratic, and 41 percent as Independent. This trend, tracked since 2004, reveals a gradual increase in independent affiliation.

Independents believe if you don't agree with everything a party stands for, then don't vote for them. Why limit your opinions to a party when you can embrace your own beliefs? People often question the point of taking an unpopular stance because of the unlikelihood that they will ever win any major election, but the solution is convincing enough Americans to commit to change.

As a voter, stand by your beliefs and accept people for individual beliefs and not their parties. As a politician, present your opinions, not your party's, and gather supporters that agree with you. Stop promoting ridiculous strategies of lies and deception that corrupt our country and political offices.

Together we can change the system to accommodate for a less partisan system, one that does not divide Americans, but instead unites them as a Nation indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.



Blueprint Cartoon / Freschttta Warres

Opinion

By The Victors

The importance of accurate historical education in the modern world

Jamie Lattin | Editor-in-Chief

As I stood at the front of my fourth-grade class wearing a fake beard and hat, I couldn't feel the blood on my hands.

"My name is Francisco Pizzaro," I said, pride tinging my voice. "And I conquered the Incas."

I went on to explain my life story, occasionally glancing at my friend in the corner sporting a convincing Balboa costume. I nonchalantly explained the fact that I captured an emperor, dismantled a society, and suppressed multiple native rebellions. From my tone, you might have thought I was describing what I had for breakfast.

I was 5,000 miles and 500 years away from his crimes, but good historical education would have put me right in the middle of them. It would have held my eyes and ears open to hear the screams and witness the men, women, and children being slaughtered for colonial greed.

But it was far away from me. I got a different version of history, one dripping in money, victory, and a life of adventurous exploration. The subjugation was in fine print; it was impossible to read while blinded by shining piles of gold and silver.

We were taught to re-

spect these conquerors. We were dressing up as them and celebrating their lives, heroizing them despite their wrongdoings. We even painted their portraits on paper plates and hung them on the walls for open house.

Looking back on it makes my stomach turn. We were a predominantly white class, so nobody thought much of it at the time, but what if a family with Andean heritage walked into our classroom and saw the men who brutalized their ancestors enshrined on the walls?

It is unacceptable. Change can't wait for high school or college. We need to start ed-

ucating our youngest community members from day one.

This doesn't mean we have to teach kindergartners about colonization. However, it means that they shouldn't be dressing up as Native Americans and spoon feed a simplified, bastardized version of Indigenous culture. It means that we shouldn't be making construction paper boats and celebrating Christopher Columbus. It means we shouldn't be taught to revere the men who killed millions of innocent people. It means that if you can't teach the ugly parts of his-

tory, you shouldn't teach it at all.

After removing these problematic pieces of curriculum, we have room to teach kids about the individual and distinct aspects of different Indigenous groups instead of cramming them into a caricature.

Thanks to the actions of men like Francisco Pizzaro, we will never fully understand the history of indigenous groups in North and South America. I plan on studying archaeology in college to be a part of filling in those vital gaps, but it saddens me to know that it will

Continued on 33



Contributing Cartoonist / Ethan Walker

Latinos Unidos Club: A Vital Addition to Campus

Zevin Acuna | Contributing Writer

The Latinx experience at Acalanes High School is an interesting one, to say the least. Just like for any other race at Acalanes, there are positive and negative experiences. We are a minority in a majority white community; this means we are subject to more racism and situations that result in harm to our mental health.

Latinx students make up just nine percent of the student population in the

AUHSD. Being a minority can be a daunting experience on campus; there are “safe places,” but how do you know where you can actually be comfortable and safe? What does it mean to be safe?

This is where Latinos Unidos, a Latinx empowerment club, comes into play. Seniors Zevin Acuña, Miles Burger, Zubin Acuña and Zoya Acuña created Latinos Unidos this year to follow

the model of the Black Student Union (BSU), created by 2020 alum Jaedyn Boynton, and senior Deja Cooper. Just like her work with the BSU, Human Social Development and AP Environmental Science teacher Jada Paniagua, will serve as advisor for Latinos Unidos.

The idea is to create a safe space open to all, with an emphasis on creating a safe space for Latinx students. The purpose is not

to celebrate Latin American Independence days, or Cinco de Mayo (an American Holiday). We created Latinos Unidos to create a space where Latinx students are the majority for once in the Acalanes community, where there is freedom to laugh, cry and share experiences. All are welcome and encouraged to attend.

By The Victors

Continued from 32

hardly make a difference. What’s lost is lost.

A few years ago, my family was decorating for Thanksgiving. We’ve always saved school projects to use as decoration around the house. As my mom started to put them up, we collectively realized how inappropriate they were. The depictions of Native Americans were composed of stereotypes, and the dioramas presented a skewed picture of peaceful coexistence. We opted for leaves and a turkey made of pine cones instead.

I have always been passionate about history. As a young student, this meant absorbing the information I got in class and as I grew up, it meant seeking out al-

ternative sources. The more I did this, the more I learned about the horrific realities of history.

In high school, I often had to continue the trend of self-education. We learn about colonization, however, we learn about it in the context of European and American history. Genocide is collateral damage in those historical atmospheres.

We have a World History class at Acalanes, but in many instances the curriculum represents simplified western history. By the time I had taken AP European History and AP US History, I had relearned all of the material. And it’s undoubtedly important material. But the consequence of repeating western history is

ignorance about true world history.

In recent years, our district has begun to take a critical look at its curriculum. I know it takes significant time and effort to overhaul material that we’ve covered for decades. But it needs to be our top priority.

If we don’t do this now, we will continue to leave gaping holes in the historical education of our community’s youth. It is a detriment to their understanding of the modern world and their development as educated members of society. To all the great history teachers out there, thank you, because the more we teach history— real history— the better we all become.



What Are Your Pronouns?

The importance of your pronouns in your introductions and social media presence.

Emerson Brown | Opinion Editor

“What are your pronouns?” That question catches so many people off guard, for no reason other than a person is asking how someone else would like to be referred to by other people.

That’s all pronouns are: a way to refer to people. Pronouns aren’t political, they’re not socialist, they’re not radical; they’re grammar, and they’re a sign of respect.

The most common pronouns are he/him/his, she/her/hers, and they/them/theirs. Everyone has pronouns; humans have pronouns, animals have pronouns, and sometimes, people even give some inanimate objects pronouns. Before the argument even starts, they/them pronouns are grammatically correct; Merriam Webster, the College Board, and societal language change determined this. Society changes, language changes, and people change with it or they get left behind. You probably use they/them pronouns every day without even realizing

it. When you don’t know the owner of some item you might say “I wonder who left their jacket” or if you’re looking for somebody you might say “what do they look like?”

Pronouns are respect and the correct way to refer to people to avoid misgendering them, and furthermore, invalidating their identity.

Gender pervades America’s currently binary society, but how is gender defined? Cisgender people’s sex and gender align, whereas transgender people’s sex and gender do not align. Sex is biological, made of chromosomes, genitalia, and hormones, and gender is an identity, who you are internally. There are binary transgender people (male to female, female to male) and there are non-binary people who identify as both binary genders, neither binary gender, or something else altogether.

If transgender people transition, a large part of this is chang-

ing their pronouns to match their identity. While this may seem trivial to many cisgender people who are consistently referred to by their correct pronouns, using incorrect pronouns causes transgender people a lot of pain.

Asking people their pronouns not only allows you to be sure you’re referring to someone correctly, cisgender or transgender, but it reinforces a transgender person’s identity and makes society a little more inviting to such a marginalized group. Asking someone’s pronouns is especially important to non-binary people because our modern society is binary and they/them pronouns must be specifically asked for.

Putting your pronouns in your bio or description for social media helps transgender people avoid being singled out by transphobes. It is a way to further normalize pronouns and it makes the internet more inclusive and safe.

When people do not respect transgender people’s pronouns, the effects can be drastic. First, taking into account the discrimination, oppression, and overall not-so-kind life that many transgender people face, asking pronouns is just one kind thing you can do to make someone’s day. Being misgendered or dead named (using a name that a person used prior to transitioning) can contribute to gender dysphoria, which is when a transgender person feels uncomfortable with their assigned gender at birth.

Roughly 90 percent of trans-

gender people have experienced harassment, mistreatment, or discrimination on the job according to the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD). Also according to GLAAD, About 41 percent of transgender people report attempting suicide.

However, this can be prevented with nothing more than a little kindness. According to the Family Acceptance Project, LGBTQ youth are almost 50 percent less likely to attempt suicide when their families are accepting of their identity. The effects of acceptance are massive and a major part of that is using people’s correct pronouns and normalizing asking pronouns.

If you change the way you refer to transgender people, with both pronouns and their new name you’re bound to make mistakes and that’s totally normal. If you mess up, correct yourself, move on, and don’t make a big deal out of it.

Next time you meet someone new make sure to say your name and your pronouns.

A final note: As we begin a new school year through distance learning, the learning management system, Canvas, has the option for users to put their pronouns next to their name. This makes our school district more inclusive and more equitable for both transgender and cisgender people. To put your pronouns in your name go to Canvas > account > settings > edit settings > and choose your pronouns.



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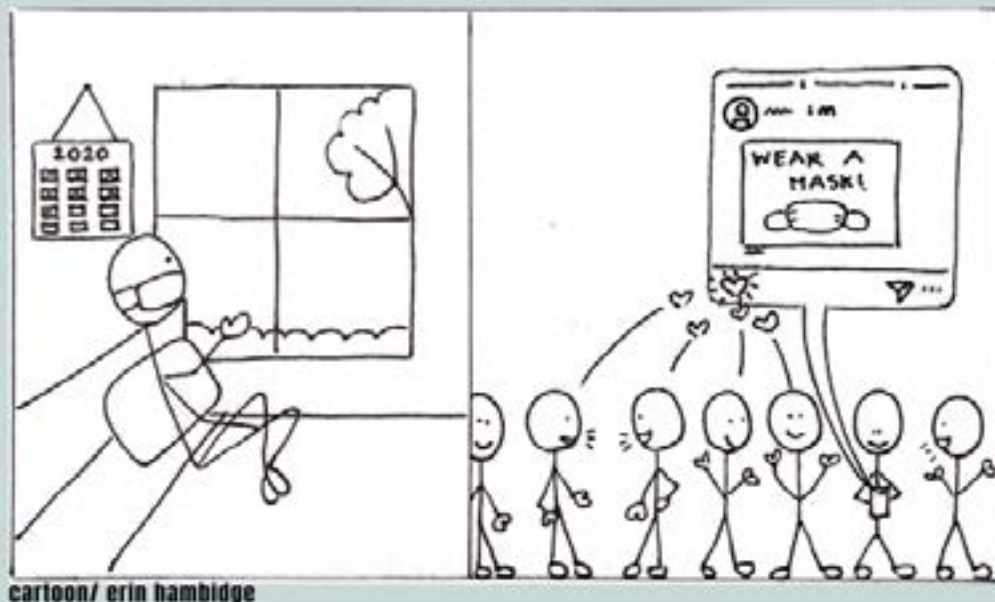
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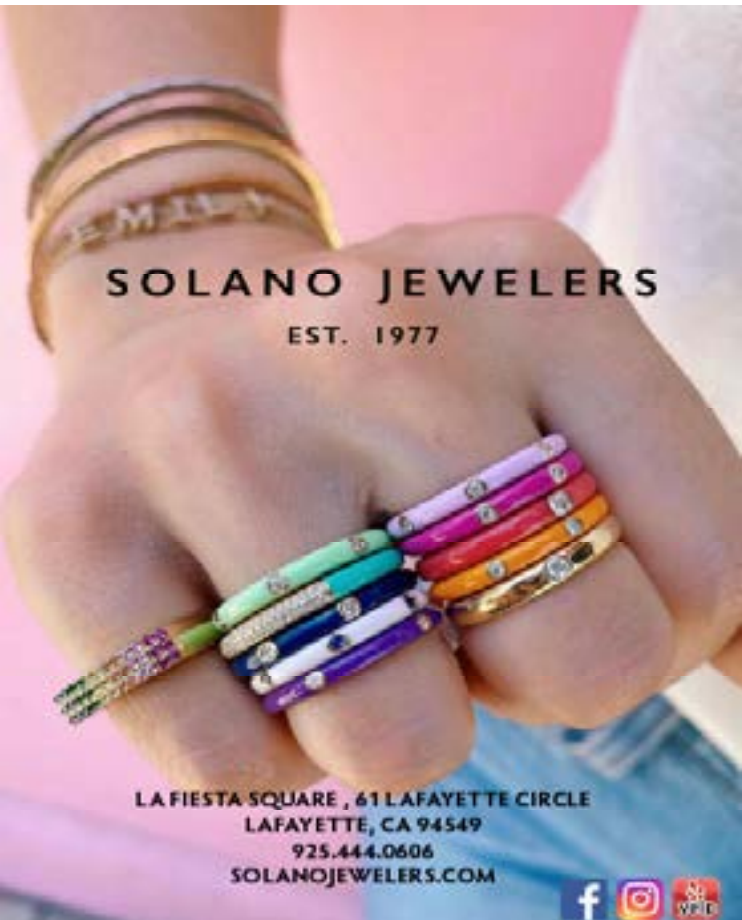
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Senior Collegiate Commits Secure Division I Scholarships

Athletes compete for collegiate recognition despite the current circumstances

Mason Archer and Helen O'neal |
Sports Editor and Staff Writer

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, which constantly disrupts everyday life, high school athletes across the country continue to pursue sports at the collegiate level.

However, under the current circumstances, athletes have a bigger responsibility to self-promote if they wish to receive recognition and scholarships for their athletic ability.

Despite the current challenges college recruitment poses, four senior Acalanes athletes, Joey Carillo, Claire Rowell, Alex Mould, and Michael Castelli secured scholarships to play Division I sports.

Joey Carillo

After a phenomenal junior season, Joey Carillo received an offer in early June to play football at University of California (UC) Davis and committed shortly after.

"I committed to UC Davis because it really serves as the best situation for me," Carillo said. "I get to play Division I football within driving distance of home and a UC school that offers me a very good education."



Courtesy Photo | Joey Carillo

Along with a strong academic environment at the forefront of Carillo's decision, the coaching staff and style of football allowed Carillo the most opportunity for success.

"Their brand of football fits and allows me to focus on school equally. The coaches have been very personable and upfront with me regarding the recruitment process and what they're looking for from me, which I'm really happy with," Carillo said.

In addition to the immense hard work and dedication vital to Carillo's success, he expresses the importance of the people around him and his love for the game.

"I've always loved the contact in football which contributed to my love for the game," Carillo said. "My dad has always supported me in every venture and he really pushed me to be the athlete I am now. I'd say he is the biggest inspiration in my life and making him proud has been one of the most fulfilling experiences in my life."

Not only have Carillo's in-game contributions added to the success of the team, but his teammate touches on the crucial role Carillo plays as a leader on the field.

"Joey always leads by example, especially on game day. He becomes vocal when people are messing up and he always holds himself accountable," outside linebacker and senior Niko Cortessis said.

In light of his outstanding accomplishments, Carillo expresses that his achievements are a byproduct of his hard work and devotion.

"I wanted to leave high school and eventually college knowing I did everything I could to be the best I could be. Also to have no regrets regarding my athletic career, which served as motivation," Carillo said.

Claire Rowell

Following her family's legacy, Claire Rowell committed to play water polo at UC Berkeley (Cal) in early August this year.

"My whole family's gone to Cal: both my grandpas, both my parents, like half of my aunts and uncles, and my older brother goes to Cal, so I've liked Cal since I was little. I've always gone to Cal football games, so when they offered me it was really cool and I was super excited about it," Rowell said.

Rowell's competitive nature serves as motivation pushing her to always compete at the

highest level.

"I really love the game. I'd say I'm one of those people that really wants to play as well as I can at every single game. I always want to win which motivates me to work harder and I get to be there with my friends every single day," Rowell said.



Courtesy Photo | Claire Rowell

Acalanes women's varsity water polo coach, Misha Buchel, indicates the significant impact Rowell had on the team's success.

"She has an incredible sense of anticipation and high water polo IQ, so as a result, she would anticipate the change of possession when we would be on defense to breakout into offense. So she had so many one on one breakaway situations," Buchel said.

Despite the top-level scholarships athletes are always chasing, Rowell emphasizes that all athletes should pursue collegiate sports, even those below the Division I level.

"I think a lot of people believe that playing a sport in college means that you have to go to Division I, but I think that no matter what sport you play, if you just really like it, there is a spot for everyone. I was lucky to find the spot that I wanted, and I know that if you really like to play the sport then there will be a spot for you somewhere," Rowell said.

Continued on 44

Poor Air Quality Causes Inconsistent Scheduling for Athletics

Ruinous wildfires bring athletics to a screeching halt

Noah Glosson | Head Section Editor

As athletic practices make their way back to Acalanes amidst a pandemic, student-athletes, administrators, and coaches are already facing another major setback.

Due to historic heatwaves and extremely dry conditions, wildfires continue to ravage parts of Northern California.

After seeing a rapid decline in air quality, Acalanes Athletic Director Randy Takahashi initially called off all athletic events due to health concerns.

“For the first week, we had to cancel athletic events when the fires first broke out,” Takahashi said.

With all the troubles the world has endured over the past few months, coaches remain persistent in helping student-athletes prepare for the return of athletics in the winter.

“We are organizing opportunities for the prospective players to participate in pre-season activities including on-field play and fitness and conditioning work,” varsity men’s soccer head coach Paul Curtis said. “This is a philosophy grounded in encouraging student-athletes to have balance in their lives and participate in multiple activities and sports.”

According to North Coast Section (NCS) protocol, any measurement of air quality above 151 on the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Air Quality Index (AQI) results in immediate cancellation of all outdoor events.

With wildfire season in full swing, the air quality in Lafayette is among the worst in the Bay Area with the EPA deeming the air quality in Lafayette consistently poor and unhealthy.

On some days the AQI does measure air quality acceptable for outdoor events, however with frequent fluctuations in air quality ranging anywhere from good to unhealthy, scheduling practices and events are becoming a daunting task.

“When the air quality got better we could run practices again, but as the air quality got worse when night came, we had to call off practices,” Takahashi said.

In addition to poor air quality, athletes and coaches face another challenge: heat. Extreme heatwaves are scorching the region at record temperatures leaving athletes to play in tough conditions.

However, according to varsity football player and junior Evan Malmquist, playing under such circumstances could be beneficial in the future.

“I could definitely tell that I was sweating a lot more and felt like I had to constantly be

drinking liquids,” Malmquist said. “I also felt as though it was a little harder to breathe but the more we practice in these environments the easier it will be in normal conditions.”

Despite the cancellations, Acalanes student-athletes are trying to remain active during the hiatus.

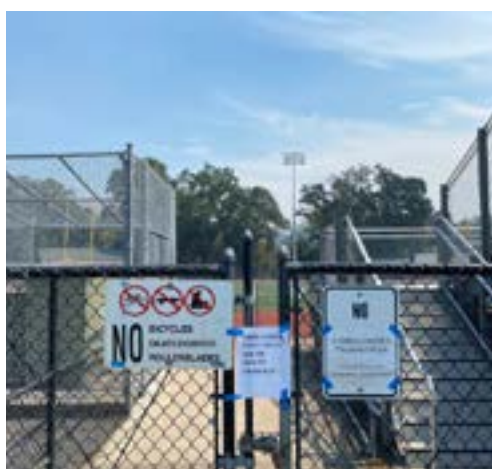
“As of right now with the air, we have not been able to go to practice at all,” Malmquist said. “But some of my teammates have been going to Acalanes and getting some work in.”

Additional athletes, including senior varsity water polo player Jay Mills, are struggling to practice given the circumstances.

“It’s weird because on a lot of these hot days I would have been at a friend’s house in the pool,” Mills said. “With the pandemic and smoke, I haven’t been able to do things like swimming to cool off.”

Still, there is no predictable timeline of return. With fires still raging across the region, Takahashi is hopeful that fires will clear up and practices can resume.

“With the fires slowly being contained, we are optimistic that we can resume practices and athletics within a reasonable timeline,” Takahashi said.



Blueprint Photo | Emma Liffelman

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Maskless Sports Practices Continue With Increased Precautions

Athletic directors and coaches hold practices and camps daily with encouraging student participation

Lulu Milnes and Jacque Peacock | Staff Writers

As students become accustomed to on-line learning, sports present their own challenges for the upcoming year.

The California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) announced on July 20 that all fall sports were suspended until mid-December, at the earliest. Despite the suspension, students and coaches have found ways to adapt; teams split up into groups of 12 players maximum with no direct contact between players, however, wearing masks is not a requirement.

For sports practices to be held, the administration and athletic directors devised a plan to ensure a safe practice environment.

"The district and athletic directors along with the administration meet about every two weeks to review our guidelines," Acalanes Athletic Director Randy Takahashi said. "We go by district guidelines, which come off of the county and state guidelines, and we tend to be more strict than either."

Each team is split into multiple groups of 12 or less, called pods. The administration designed pods to prevent the spread of COVID-19, allowing a more contained outbreak if an athlete were to catch the disease.

Additionally, during practice coaches enforce social distancing rules to avert contact amongst players.

"We always have the exact same practice group in our pods and its 12 people at the most. It is very spread out, no contact, and the coaches are administering it and just watching everyone," junior varsity lacrosse player Gabby Sandberg said.

If an athlete contracts COVID-19, all

participants in their pod will immediately receive a notification from administration and coaches will suspend all future practices for said pod.

"If there is a positive COVID-19 test then that camp is canceled immediately and will not come back until all the participants have been isolated for 14 days with no symptoms or have received a negative COVID-19 test reading," Takahashi said.

In addition, pods use their own set of practice equipment to prevent the spread of the virus between pods.

"The quarterbacks will each bring a football and it's their responsibility to sanitize the football by wiping it down before and after," sophomore Jake Takeuchi said.

With equipment being limited to individual pods, athletes outside of a compromised pod never become exposed.

Although the likelihood of an athlete contracting the virus may seem inevitable, the precautions in place to combat the virus have proven to be effective.

"In our meeting at the league level, of all the schools that are doing any kind of sports activities, of all 13 schools, there's been one positive COVID-19 test," Takahashi said.

Despite the more lenient guidelines allowed by the state, the administration and athletic directors are following stricter guidelines to create a more secure setting.

"By state standards, we could do indoor activity, but we just feel that we're not ready to do that yet," Takahashi said.

Coaches and athletic directors believe that by taking stricter precautionary measures, it will ensure they can continue hosting practices and camps, which have proven popular among athletes.

"It's very honorable on our coaches because they really see that the student comes first," Takahashi said. "We're hearing the students say they're disconnected a lot. For them, normalcy has been taken away and just to have some sort of normalcy has been really positive."



Blueprint Cartoon | Zoe Edelman

Athletes Face College Recruitment Difficulties During Quarantine

Delays pose repercussions to the college recruitment process

Marisa Guerra Echeverria and Daniel Adri | Staff Writers

In the light of the current difficulties revolving around the continuation of sports, athletics and organized competition pose a higher health risk to its participants than ever before. The California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) announced on July 20 that high school sports would resume in December 2020 or January 2021.

The Acalanes Union High School District's (AUHSD) decision to cancel spring sports last March, now extends into the 2020-2021 school year with the cancellation of all athletics for the first semester.

This pushback for high school sports reflects similar obstacles in the world of collegiate athletics. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) set a complete recruiting ban on all Division I sports effective until late September.

"The Division I schools can't recruit on or off-campus right now, which means kids can't even come to our campus and meet with us.

Whereas for Division II, Division III, and National Association for Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA), those rules are different," head soccer coach and recruiting coordinator for Saint Mary's College Adam Cooper said.

Despite this inconvenience, college coaches and high school students who remain in contact can still communicate virtually.

"Getting a coach on the phone or call over Zoom has become very important since this is the most personal the experience can get because most in-person visits cannot be offered," varsity water polo player and senior Caroline Schirmer said.

However, that line of communication comes easier to high school athletes who have already established connections with college coaches through recruitment compared to athletes new to the process.

"I have been contacting coaches via email to get an opportunity to show them my film, as well as signing up for camps," varsity football player and junior Logan Ketcham said.

Student-athletes who are beginning the recruitment process must also adapt and put together game footage to send to college coaches to make



up for social distancing regulations. Yet video footage misses many crucial facets of gameplay.

"We can have somebody that is a really good soccer player but if we see that they're not a good teammate, that they're frustrated because they're not getting the ball, that's always a red flag. So we like to see them in the game environment to see how they get, how they react, and how they evolve throughout the game," Holy Names University soccer assistant coach and recruiting coordinator Kevin Esquivel said.

Despite its pros and cons, video footage plays an essential role in the college recruitment process this year.

"A lot of coaches are going to be making decisions just based on the video, which is why video is more important. And it's also hard because kids aren't playing soccer and games, so they don't have video content to create. So that's why the timing is going to be awkward," Cooper said.

The pushback's timing also created repercussions for the 2020-2021 college recruitment as early as March 2020. The NCAA now allows colleges that canceled their spring seasons during COVID-19 to give their senior players another year of eligibility this upcoming season. However, it remains a school-by-school decision whether seniors receive equal or less financial aid as recruits start joining teams with scholarships of their own.

This change poses unprecedented challenges for college sports teams and college athletic hopefuls. It would mean having a few extra players on sports rosters, leading to more competition for playing-time between newer recruits and seasoned athletes playing out their last year of eligibility. On the other end, there may be schools that struggle with recruitment due to players choosing to defer their scholarships for a year during online learning.

"I would say academic scholarships are what's most important because they help supplement athletic scholarships from those sports; you can kind of combine them. There's a lot of different scholarships out there that are more important

Blueprint Cartoon | Anna Yiannikos

now than ever for kids to research and do their homework on to figure out what's available," Cooper said.

Another struggle student-athletes face is beginning the recruiting process on account of the delayed season. Outside of their regular seasons, student-athletes put their skills on display for visiting coaches at tournaments, showcases, and talent identification camps.

"I was planning on going to many recruitment camps, however most of the camps have been postponed and a few have been canceled," Ketcham said.

The pandemic also put a hold on students' official recruitment trips to universities, making the commitment to a college team much more difficult.

"I personally think official trips are really important because if you are going to spend four years of your life at the school and on that team, you want to make sure it's the right fit for you in all aspects: academics, location, sports, and size," Schirmer said.

To make up for the circumstances during COVID-19, 2015 acalanes alumni Brady Aiello, who participates on the Cleveland Browns practice squad, believes that establishing personal connections with coaches is a key to athletes getting their names out there.

"High schoolers are going to have to rely on trying to form relationships with coaches from universities since there are less camps and opportunities for athletes," Aiello said.

Although the pandemic and the delay for in-person sports constitute many challenges for the recruitment process, college coaches advise student-athletes to remain steadfast in committing to collegiate athletics.

"Stay diligent, be persistent, do your homework. Make sure you know what you're talking about when you talk to coaches, but reach out to coaches," Cooper said.

Continued on 44

Virtual PE, Yoga, and Weights

Students must perform their physical education classes from home

Helen O'Neal and Gabriella Gruber | Staff Writers

Among the challenges students and administration face upon the implementation of online learning, students must tackle the problems and benefits that arise from performing their physical education classes online.

So far, physical education classes have focused on the academic side of physical education instead of the physical aspect.

"Frosh students have been doing some academic work with answering questions and learning about the state physical fitness tests. They will soon be doing labs and workouts that will help them prepare for the test if we ever get back for the second semester," Physical Education teacher and Department Chair Chris Clark said. opportunities to lift weights, parents express the benefits of their children getting in-depth learning on health and nutrition.

"[My daughter] has room at our house to do the activities but we don't have gym equipment, so my daughter is somewhat limited. The teacher has encouraged kids without weights to find alternative equipment that is around the house. Otherwise, I do think the teacher is doing a great job teaching some knowledge-based fundamentals," parent Jennifer Ahlskog said.

Students expressed concerns about not being able to learn and physically participate in weight training.

"The problem is that since not everybody has access to weights, I don't

think that we are going to be doing weights, which is kind of why I signed up for the class," sophomore Simon Hornik said.

Andrea Ruotsi, a new emergency Physical Education intern teacher, shared similar concerns with teaching virtual weights classes. Ruotsi aims to give her students the opportunity to weight lift at home, however due to high demand for weight training supplies, it is increasingly hard to purchase said products.

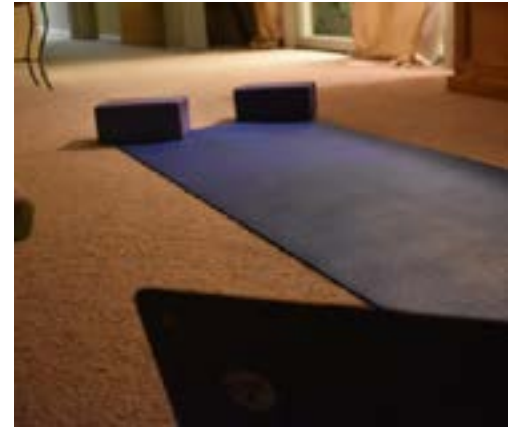
"I happen to own a studio, and I have a prop that I bought a lot of that I don't currently use. It's a really weighted exercise tube that they can do some weight training activities with. I have about 40 of them, and there are about 85 weight training students. So I was thinking of contacting the company to see if they would be interested in donating or giving us a really good price on the 40 additional props," Ruotsi said.

Additionally, teachers are having difficulties getting to know their students over Zoom.

"I wish that I knew them better and could connect. It's very hard to connect with students in general and I think it is something that a teacher really works on. Not to mention if you have to do it with a screen and miles apart from one another, and not really ever being able to physically connect with them, it's very difficult," Ruotsi said.

Students have faced their own set of challenges attempting to participate in physical education classes online.

"It's pretty hard for me to do activities during a PE zoom because I don't have the best set up to move around a lot, it's pretty cramped," freshman Ruby Deeming said.



Blueprint Photo | Keith Johnson

While some students have experienced trouble completing assignments, others have been finding creative ways to receive credit with minimal effort. In addition, teachers face academic honesty among students due to their limited ability to monitor students as they work.

"I have some friends that just [get into the stretching pose], take a picture, and go do the other ones. They're supposed to be doing the stretches for a little bit. The whole point of it is to be doing a stretch, but they just want to get done with it rather than actually spending time and working on it," freshman Adam Emtage said.

Despite the challenges, Canvas has helped both students and teachers navigate distance learning.

"Canvas has helped PE because all our zoom links and activities are there in one spot," freshman Nicole Parlett said.

Teachers and administrators have been trying hard to make physical education classes work smoothly, and their efforts appear to be paying off.

"It's definitely harder to get the same yoga experience at home then we would at school, but we're making the best of what is able to be taught at home," sophomore Ashley Donner said.

The Challenges of Coaching During a Pandemic

Coaches find ways to adapt to the guidelines in place due to COVID-19

Andrew Habas | Staff Writer

As coaches and athletes return to athletics this year, coaches face a challenging task as they try to provide meaningful practices while adhering to health guidelines.

Administration and coaches work closely to provide a safe environment for athletes to compete and practice. However, coaches in Lamorinda have struggled to adapt to the restrictions issued by the county health department involving the adherence of necessary rules for the continuation of sports. New rules include a max of 12 people only practices, shorter practices, coaches wearing masks, and strict social distancing.

On the bright side, multiple sports including boys and girls tennis, football, girls volleyball, and softball have slowly received more flexibility regarding the guidelines in place during practices. But, coaches are still struggling to provide meaningful practices with normal drills due to the limitations in place to combat the spread of COVID-19.

"It's been challenging enforcing all the rules the district has put upon us and it's impossible to be perfect," Acalanes football team coach Greg Young said.

Acalanes Athletic Director Randy Takahashi explained the necessary precautions coaches take during practice to ensure the safety of the players.

"Coaches must enforce social distancing between players, and they must also make clear to the players that they cannot attend any practices or workouts with any flu-like symptoms at all," Takahashi said.

While strict social distancing rules are in place to provide a safe practice environment, Young expressed the difficulty with consistently adhering to social distancing rules during practices.

"It's been hard to adapt to everything for sure, we can't keep the players socially distant at all times, but we're doing our best," Young said.

Furthermore, Young indicates the struggles with enforcing rules about the comings and

goings of athletes from the field.

"All the players are supposed to wear masks to and from the field, but it has been a struggle to enforce this rule among everyone," Young said.

With the cancellation of spring sports following the closure of school last spring, the possibility of sports being suspended yet again should be extremely concerning for Acalanes athletes. Coaches' primary focus remains on the athletes as they prepare for the upcoming season.

"Well it's always been about the players, it's like that for every coach. We are out there to help you succeed, and the only thing that hurts us is the possibility of not seeing you guys out there competing," Young said.

In addition to high school athletics, travel and club teams currently continuing their seasons adhere to county health guidelines as well. Steve Hammond, a coach of a Moraga travel team called the Bay Area Ballplayers, expresses the similar guidelines his program follows.

"Throughout the whole summer, the county has been very clear on sanitizing equipment and spacing kids out during practices and workouts. Coaches have had to wear masks

and be in charge of monitoring kids and making sure they are spaced out. We have been very good at cleaning all our equipment as best we can, but there is only so much we can do," Hammond said.

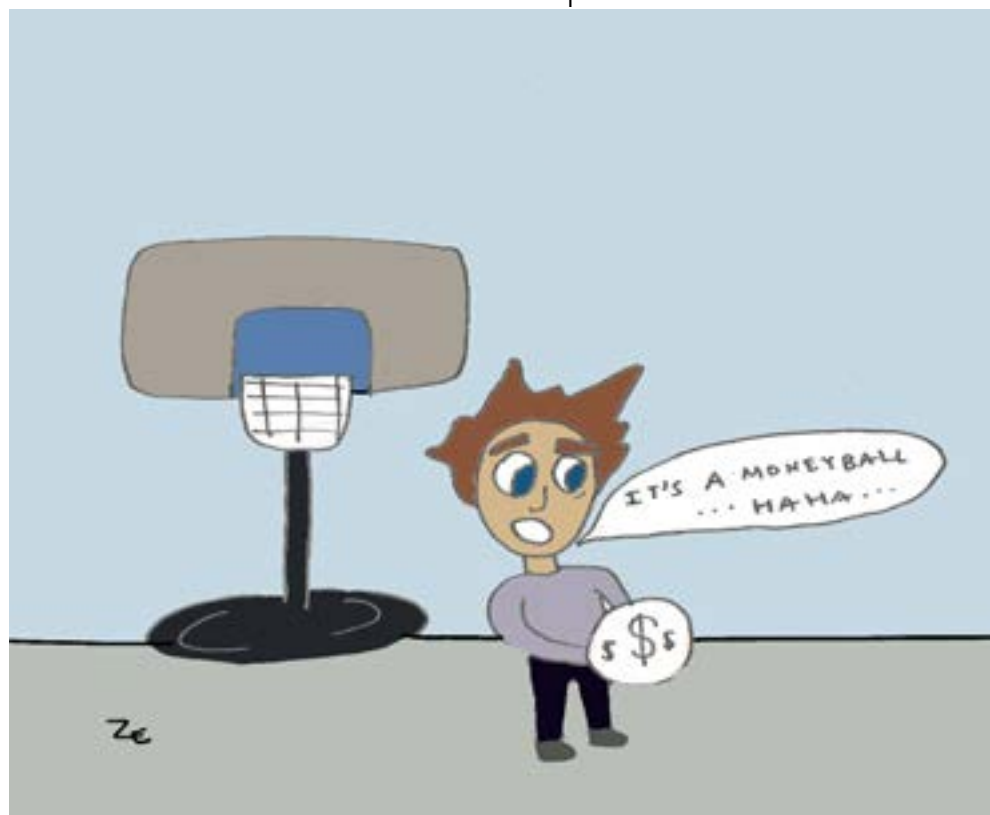
Hammond expressed the difficulty of scheduling sports events for his program resulting from the shut down of numerous public places.

"We were able to have baseball practices at Rancho Laguna Park in Moraga, and I also do a conditioning clinic for Lacrosse up at Campo. We also have fields lined up that we need a permit for and I'm working on that now," Hammond said. "Fields have been really hard to come by because cities and schools have shut a lot of fields down around our community."

As of now, the future regarding athletics at Acalanes and our community is very much up in the air.

"I'm optimistic for a return to sports, but for now all we can do is follow the rules and listen to what the district has to say," Young said.

Blueprint Cartoon | Zoe Edelman



Recruitment

Continued from 38

Alex Mould

Complementing the renowned Acalanes women's water polo program, Alex Mould committed to play water polo at UC Irvine (UCI) on Aug. 28.

"The academics, the teammates, the coaches, and the location was just the perfect fit. Walking around, I could see myself there," Mould said.

Through the recruitment process, Mould had the opportunity to speak with college coaches individually.

"You're the only one talking to the coach, no parents. Your high school coaches will give you good things to say, but they are not doing any of the communication for you. You really get to know the college coaches. You'll be talking to them for over six months, so having to turn down not only a school but also their coaches is really hard," Mould said.

One of Mould's first coaches and current coach at Acalanes, Misha Buchel, greatly influenced Alex's decision to pursue water polo.

"Misha made me love this sport, and he made it something that I wanted to be doing for the rest of my life. Coming into high school again, he gave that same energy and positivity that grew me as a player but also as a person outside of the pool," Mould said.

Acalanes women's varsity water polo driver and utility, Alana McCartney, describes Mould's valuable contributions to the team's successes.

"Alex is a fantastic water polo player and her determination to improve herself appears infinite. Alex brings a lot of goofy energy to the team, whether it's during practice or game warmups," McCartney said. "We rely on Alex a lot on defense as she is our primary set defender."

With the tremendous success Mould has had, she mentions her teammates as vital components that helped motivate her to compete each day.

"My biggest inspiration that kept me going were my teammates at practice and just seeing how hard they were working. They were pushing themselves and making me want to push myself so I compete better for them in games," Mould said.



Courtesy Photo | Alex Mould

Michael Castelli

Michael Castelli plays a key part among an extremely talented Acalanes baseball team, consisting of multiple Division I commits,

"Michael played a key role for us since our freshman year," shortstop and senior Davis Diaz said. "He always puts us in positions to win games when he pitches and always seems to be in control of the game."

Following three solid seasons, Castelli received an offer this past January from Saint Mary's College (SMC) and verbally committed in early March.

"I didn't mind the distance and thought that I'd be able to pursue academics there, so receiving a scholarship to play in a program that I really liked with great coaches and school atmosphere was the deciding factor," Castelli said.

Growing up, Castelli compet-

ed for the Lamorinda Baseball Club which helped elevate his baseball talent but also motivated him to work hard to distinguish himself from his teammates.

"I joined a very talented travel ball team when I was 12, and competed in nation-wide events, but I always remained under the radar compared to the more outstanding players," Castelli said.

Subsequently, Castelli pushed himself to get better every day aiming to make his goals a reality.

"While I was confident, playing division one baseball was never a certainty, it was more of a long term goal that I was pursuing," Castelli said.

Despite the impressive baseball programs Castelli competed for, the spotlight didn't distract him from his ultimate goal of playing at the collegiate level.

"He's a grinder, he goes about his business and does what he needs to do no matter what," Diaz said.

As talented as Castelli is, he credits his fellow teammate for inspiring him to be the person and athlete he is today.

"My favorite baseball player and biggest inspiration is Diaz. He is in every aspect a perfect human, and a beacon of positivity and greatness in our own humble lives," Castelli said.

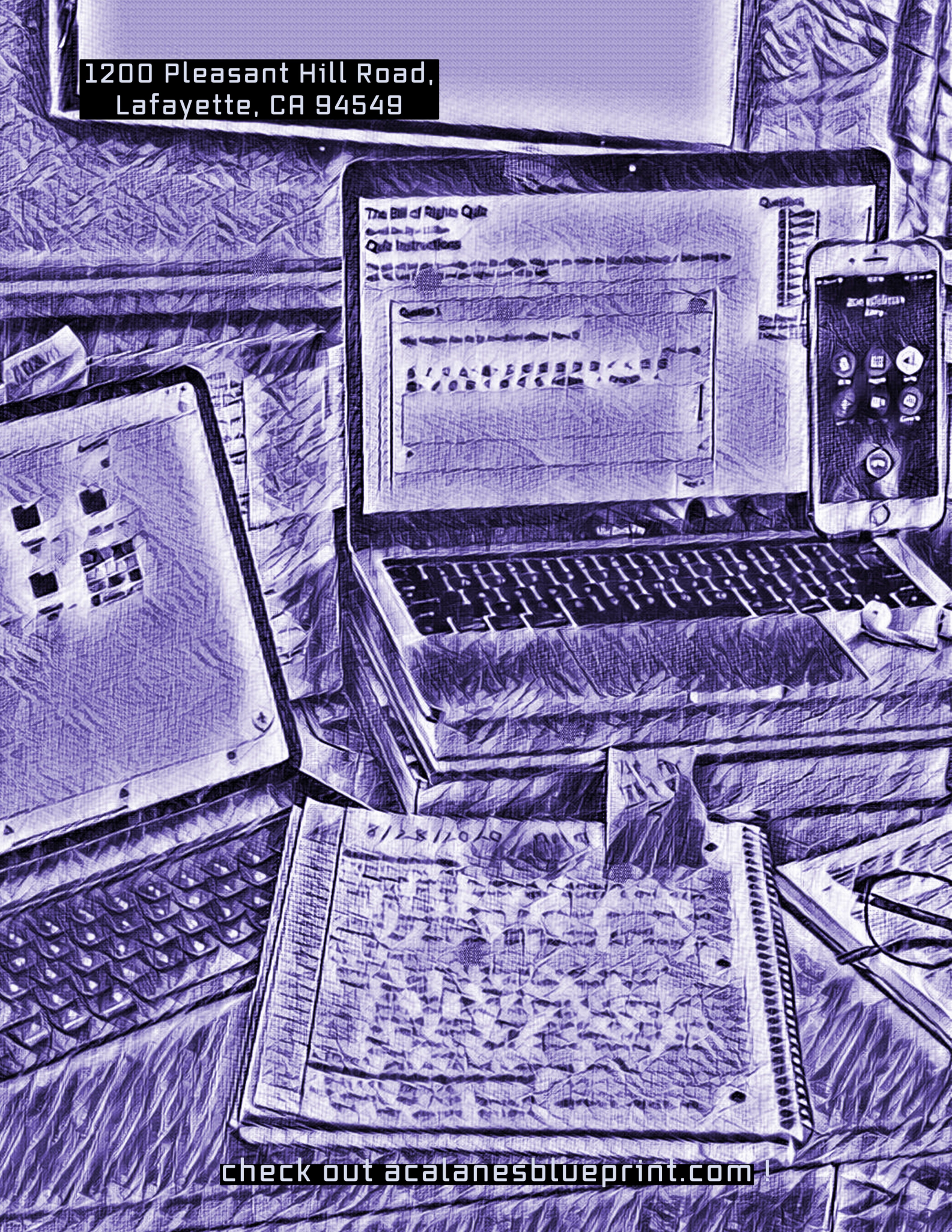


Courtesy Photo | Michael Castelli



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